

CLERGYWOMEN PRACTICING PREACHING: RAISING THE VOICE OF BROKEN
WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO LANGUISH IN THE PEWS

By

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTIAN WOMEN FLOWERING THROUGH PRAXIS: RAISING THE VOICE OF BROKEN WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO LANQUISH IN THE PEWS

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It is a well established and familiar fact that patriarchal and biblical teachings have never been in favor of women preaching. The Scripture that has been relied upon to enforce these teachings in the church for hundreds of years is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which states, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” Today, this belief continues to be a contentious issue for clergywomen. However, social and religious struggles for the right to the pulpit, has spawned a modicum of women pastors who have become role models for other clergywomen. Ancient biblical scripture that censures the voice of women also view them as less valuable than men. This old trend may now be moving in a direction that is favorable to women clergy who wish their voices heard during the most sacred period of the worship day, preaching God’s Holy Word.

The purpose of this project is to prepare clergywomen in my church, the One Offering Tabernacle of God (OTOG) and community to stand in the gap, by establishing a practice preaching forum to nurture and hone their teaching and preaching skills with the gospel message that brings hope to those who are bruised in the pews and the community.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

The One Offering Tabernacle of God (OTOG) is located in Cambria Heights, New York. The pastor is Archbishop Russell James and the church has been at this location for two years. There is an active membership of approximately one hundred and twenty-five. In 1996, while serving in the office of Elder in his home church, Archbishop Russell James received the call of God to ministry and to pastor his own church. One Offering Tabernacle of God was formed and incorporated at the home of Elder Russell Davenport, years before his elevation to Bishop and then as Archbishop Russell James. Present were ministers Vivienne Malabre, Bernice Coleman and Lance Carter, all of Roosevelt, Long Island, N.Y. We became the founding members of the new church. The first service was held in Hempstead, L.I. and took place on one of the coldest days of the year; attendance was composed of the pastor and his family (two adults and three children) and two other members. The glorious number of members totaled seven on opening day.

The church's Mission Statement is, "To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to teach, to spread the ancient Christian faith, energize, cultivate and be guided by the life of Christ according to the sacred traditions. We seek to sanctify the faithful through the sacraments and build up their spiritual and moral life in accordance with Holy Scriptures and the canons of the church." The pastor believed that there is no true church without meeting the needs of the community. The original setting of the One Offering Tabernacle of God (OTOG) was in

the village of Hempstead, NY. As the church grew in numbers, help and information were offered from members who worked in the field of Human Services and related disciplines such as Psychology, Counseling and Chaplaincy. They gifted the church with information and resources that made it possible for a small church to become a moving force. We were able to provide weekly services such as food, clothes, notary and referrals for shelter to those in need within our community. In 2009 the church relocated to a larger building nearby, in the same village. Two years later in August of 2011, hurricane Irene struck New York. Our church building was destroyed, thankfully, there were no human casualties. After a couple of months of searching, a facility was located in Queens, New York.

Cambria Heights is a densely populated town in Queens, NY. There is an interesting array of businesses, ranging from very small stores (mom and pop), to huge appliance and electrical manufacturing entities. There are churches adjacent to each other, several across the street from each other or on the same block. Many restaurants with ethnic cuisine, surrounded by fast food chains, make their presence known with interesting aromas that waft through the air in warm weather. The colorful decorating in store windows next to private homes, video shops and nursery centers is its own visual photograph of the uniqueness of Cambria Heights.

There are numerous churches in the area immediately surrounding Cambria Heights, which are well within a two-mile radius of OTOG. They include Hollis, Laurelton and Rosedale and are part of Community District 13. There are no fewer than fifty churches identified in the 2010 census, however, my research revealed one synagogue and slightly over one hundred churches. All of these places of worship are in close proximity to four major thoroughfares, they are the Southern State, Belt, Cross Island and Grand Central

Parkways. Public buses stop across the street from OTOG and taxi, private buses and limousine services are readily available. They provide timely and affordable transportation throughout the area.

Demographics for Cambria Heights reveal that the ethnicity of the community is 2.9% Caucasian, 91% African American and Caribbean, 4.0% Hispanic, 0.4% Asian and 1.1% Others.¹ In the 2010 Census Demographics, within the zip code 11411 (for my site) there are 10,248 females and 8,308 males, which make the harvest plentiful for the servants of God to do His work.²

The church pastor has approved the Practice Preaching Forum and is happy to have this project originate from OTOG. At this point in time, all of the church ministers have agreed to participate in this project, with the hope of seeing it come to fruition successfully. The vision for this project created a practical and positive alternative to standing and waiting for a chance to preach for clergywomen. It was morally and spiritually uplifting as well as challenging to the church and community. Our congregation currently mirrors the ethnicity of the community where the church is located. The Caucasian members and some African American members in the Hempstead church did not wish to make the transition from Hempstead to Queens.

Our current members expressed interest with excitement and a little apprehension as to a successful application of the project because many are aware of churches where women were not allowed to preach. Respect, understanding and openness toward members of a

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambria_Heights,_Queens (accessed May 15, 2012).

²<http://www.zip-codes.com/zip-code/11411/zip-code-11411-2010-census.asp> (accessed December 6, 2013)

multicultural community with whom interaction is necessary will be adhered to in this project. Nothing less can be accepted.

It is truly crucial that this project not be encumbered by cultural, religious and traditional prejudices because some of our clergywomen, as well as women and girls in the pews, come from a background (or countries) where oppression of women was seemingly natural. The daily newspapers tell us about the violence and rape against women that is tolerated by some in authority. Clergywomen at One Offering Tabernacle of God who have experienced similar degradation will be able to bring a gospel message of healing and support through this project. The personal life lessons and relationships experienced by women in the Practice Preaching Forum have helped and supported them, especially in their spiritual walk with the Lord.

Archbishop Russell James of the One Offering Tabernacle of God has given this project a welcoming and loving space with which to practice, receive training, and become whole while helping others to reach the same goals. His leadership was viewed as visionary and was respected in the community. His leadership style is transformational. It is a leadership that is “concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1990a). People who exhibit transformational leadership often have a strong set of internal values and ideals, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interests (Kuhnert, 1994).”³ He is a pastor who visits the sick and heavy laden. He is also a pastor who encourages the youth and created a Youth Pastor position to keep children gainfully busy and off the streets. I served at the One Offering Tabernacle of God as

³ Peter G. Northouse, *Introduction to Leadership Concept and Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage Press, 2010), 176-177.

a minister, preparing and serving the Holy Eucharist, preaching from time to time, and spearheading programs and fundraisers. My position as Superintendent of Sunday School also gave me the opportunity to teach and introduce new and meaningful challenges to the students (outdoor Sunday School, Community Sunday School, etc.). As the Director of Education, I envision a bible school in the near future. Archbishop Russell James wants all in leadership roles to exhibit authentic personhood, which is to be understood as transparent (who you are). This was the setting in which this project took place.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

Prescheduled church events at the project site limited the number of occasions that clergywomen were allowed to preach. These programs or events were often on a Sunday afternoon or evening when those women and girls who sat in the pews during the morning service were no longer present in the sanctuary. Many of these women who were abused, invisible and powerless needed to experience clergywomen in leadership roles during worship. The morning sermon's time frame was expressly or automatically reserved for the pastor. It was acceptable and considered normal. It was an ecclesiastic act of power of a leader. Stortz says, "The community figures significantly in the network of power within which one exercises leadership. Community can serve either to enhance or to destroy the capabilities of its leaders. Philosopher Hannah Arendt goes so far as to say that there is no real power outside a community, there is only tyranny. Power is not an individual possession, but a group phenomenon."⁴ The word "tyranny" in the previous quotation had no place as a force in the Practice Preaching Forum.

Technically, the clergywomen in the forum who came with similar goals created a community of powerful, confident, prepared and approachable women of God. They were also viewed as women who cared about other women. All of these attributes were manifested inside the church when they were given the opportunity to preach. I posit the

⁴ Martha Ellen Stortz, *Pastor Power* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 36.

theory that “anti-pulpit pastors” (my own terminology) who have interacted with clergy-women across the USA operated in a belief system that generated negativity because of adopted biases, be they social, economic, biblical, embedded or political. In addition, some pastors elevate certain biblical principles over others in order to best accommodate his/her own “selective literalism”. Clergywomen understood those leaders who have adopted the posture of “where the bible speaks, we speak and the Bible doesn’t say that women should preach.” Clergywomen wanted to depend upon them to come to the table of “dialogue” to reason because negotiation, education and a willingness to try change overcame practices of exclusion in the past as history has already revealed. Clergywomen understood who held power and authority within the church. They were not ill informed.

There was one female dissenter in my former church who believed that clergywomen who wanted to preach were simply not qualified. She claimed that they had no resume of preaching experience and did not believe that God called them to preach. She suggested that clergywomen would begin to look and preach like the men they really wanted to be. She further declared that 1Cor. 14:34 was truthful and expressed concern that clergywomen could not “cut the mustard” (function at a level of confidence) during their menses. She was ill informed.

Biblical and institutional prejudices also held some church leaders hostage to antiquated religious practices even when they wanted to make changes. Surprisingly, clergywomen detractors often help to keep in power those leaders who exclude clergywomen from preaching in the church. Crushing blows to the heart and soul of those who had a desire to preach came when those dissenters were women in congregations though not a majority.

Usually, it is the law that determines or influences how much power we have, however, within the church walls there is a hierarchy of power that all within adhere to or follow. Covey states,

Power is the faculty or capacity to act, the strength and potency to accomplish something. It is the vital energy to make choices and decisions. It also includes the capacity to overcome deeply embedded habits and to cultivate higher, more effective ones. These four factors—security, guidance, wisdom, and power—are interdependent. Security and clear guidance bring true wisdom, and wisdom becomes the spark or catalyst to release and direct power. When these four factors are present together, harmonized and enlivened by each other, they create the great force of a noble personality, a balanced character, a beautiful integrated individual.⁵

A clergymwoman friend of a different denomination (OTOG is non-denominational) was asked by her pastor to preach the Sunday morning message to approximately 700 congregants just a few minutes before the service was to begin. She declined because putting together a hastily prepared sermon would have made her look foolish and ill prepared, she said. The last preaching assignment given to her had been several months prior. Following her refusal to preach, the pastor excluded her from all duties and from the preaching roster for fourteen months; disobedience was the formal charge. I believe that disobedience at times may create a challenge which in turn can cause conflict. Conflict helps in unwrapping divergent points of view in the church, home or boardroom. I think that the iron that strokes the fire of conflict could possibly bring about change.

Boleman and Deal say, “Power in organizations is basically the capacity to make things happen. Pfeffer defines power as ‘the potential ability to influence behavior, to

⁵ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Fireside Publishers, 1989), 110.

change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they would not otherwise do.”⁶

T. L. Fry Brown states,

The role of women seemed to be chief cook, and bottle washer, childcare specialist, financier, teacher, musician, and caregiver for the pastor. I began to wonder why women who talked of the grace of God memorized the Bible, led so many to community activism, ensured that not only their children but also their husbands were saved, could not enter the pulpit. They seemed to be functioning in a specialized category of saints who ended at the bottom step of the pulpit.⁷

Men/preachers are also childcare specialists, teachers, musicians and caregivers. They have feelings also. They laugh, cry, think, feel pain and make ecclesiastic decisions that they believe honors God. While honoring God is one pathway to change, other avenues must be embraced to bring synergy in the pastor/clergywomen challenge. A theological understanding of Scripture as it pertains to clergywomen is not for those who despise biblical exegesis for revelation and a deeper connection to the almighty God or whose ignorance cannot be blamed on anyone except self. The underlying basis for engaging humankind unconditionally is love. The model or example was and is love incarnate, Jesus Christ. The power exercised by pastors/leaders is not always purposely misused. The mindset or belief was handed down and implemented by those who knew no other way. They cannot remember or do not understand that others have passed this way before and that more have established themselves in the religious preaching arenas like street corners, community centers, hospital chapels and nursing homes. When power exercised by pastors/leaders is misused, the results can be devastating. Pastors who use their influence and authority to prey

⁶ Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations* (San Francisco, Cal.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2008), 196.

⁷ Teresa L. Fry Brown, *Weary Throats and New Songs* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 14.

upon those most vulnerable in the pews break the laws of God and state and will be held accountable by the state and a higher law.

Ethics is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad in moral duty, principles, values and obligations. Birch and Rasmussen agree that, “The genesis and baseline of Christian identity is the impact of Jesus. God is understood via the Jesus account within the broader biblical account. Claims about Jesus are what distinguish Christian ethics from other streams of ethics.”⁸ Proper training in ethics in Christian ministry for pastors is of grave importance. To place ethics in the proper perspective, it would be wise to understand that improper use of authority perpetrated by professionals, against those who lack power, creates horrendous and diabolical injustice. Misuse of trust in ministry can destroy the will and soul as well as cause feelings of depression, suicide and an ultimate separation from God because the perpetrator has clouded the love and ministry of Jesus. There is no documentation as to how many victims suffered because of the egotistical and authoritative “beat downs” (publically dismissed, embarrassed) by their pastors. Some pastors feel that the pulpit is the “Oval Office” (office of power of the president of the USA) of the church and that the congregation is simply there to do their bidding.

Several years ago, a friend was duped out of her savings when she joined a new church on her block. We both visited her church but she joined. The pastor was charismatic, a great orator or proclaimer of the Word and appeared to be caring and interested in the needs of the community. At some point, she relinquished her life savings into the hands of this pastor. I don’t know why she did it; I still do not know today, she will not talk about it. The doors of the church were closed after eight months and he just vanished. I went with her to

⁸ Bruce C. Birch & Larry L. Rasmussen, *Bible & Ethics in the Christian Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1989), 105.

the police station and talked with detectives in what was known as the fraud and confidence squad. We looked through books of mug shots (photos of criminals posing as preachers). The idea of books and books of con men wearing clergy collars was mindboggling to me. She was not able to identify anyone and we never saw that preacher again. Ethics is mandated by God and by the state. Clergypersons are not to be ignorant but endowed with the Holy Spirit that grant believers discernment and teaches and comforts us. We are to study God's Word and remember that there are many ravenous wolves disguised in sheep's clothing. We are to exercise good common sense while understanding that all common sense is not common. We are to be good watchmen and watchwomen in this Christian walk daily.

The Practice Preaching Forum embraces non-discrimination and inclusiveness in keeping with the faith and belief that God is love. Many of the clergy in the forum are professionals in secular occupations. However, they embrace the vision and the agenda of the Practice Preaching Forum to preach the Gospel in a manner that abolishes shame, silent suffering, and an invisible persona that begs to be revealed and heard. There is a fusion and symbiosis among the clergywomen and the majority of the congregation. The Practice Preaching Forum wishes to be in close union with those women and girls with no voice anywhere. In analyzing this project that is to prepare clergywomen in my church and community to meet the challenges of those in the pews, I realized that it has required many preaching voices from the past to open the door for the vision of the Practice Preaching Forum today. It also takes teamwork to keep the door ajar. The team is profitable when they know that every member is worthy and included in the process.

There is no space for classism, sexism and stereotyping of any kind in the church. If the world (secular corporations) can operate well while maintaining a glass ceiling then the

church can accomplish much more even if we crack it just a little. A major break in the glass ceiling occurred in January 2014 when Mary Barra became the first woman to run a global automaker company. A reporter asked her what she thought about being a “trailblazing woman?” Ms. Barra replied, “I am proud to represent the men and women of General Motors, and to have this role, it is an honor and I am humbled by it. I just want to focus on leading the team.”⁹ Everywoman can be a trailblazer in her home, church or community in some small way. It would be glass shattering to hear pastors, priests, and rabbis, empower the clergywomen in their churches, temples and mosque to follow their vocation of preaching. And, the PPF is here to help prepare them.

In analyzing the commonality between practicing preaching and practicing singing, an instrument or even writing, it is very much the same. The goal was to get better, to be proficient, and to gain more confidence in one’s own ability with the help of God. Furthermore, sharing the blessings of those practiced skills can bring fulfillment in various forms to members of the congregation. Viewing preaching through the lens of clergywomen who have practiced their craft, births confidence, awareness and deeper spirituality which was translated into empowerment, not only for those who are invisible and abused in the pews but for all seekers of God.

In reality, practice is a key component to success. There was a joke that floated around on radio and television for years and the inventor is anonymous. It has been told to choirs, motivational speakers, and comedians and now used by this author. It is a joke stated in the form of a question as if someone is asking for direction to a specific location. It is as follows, “How do you get to Carnegie Hall? The punch line is “Practice, practice, practice.”

⁹New York Times, Monday, January 13, 2014 Vol. CLX111...No. 56,380, CFO Journal B6-Late edition

Carnegie Hall is a wonderful concert hall, recognized around the world as showcasing only the finest artists/performers. It is located in New York City, a few blocks from Times Square. I had the opportunity to attend concerts there. The hall seats almost four thousand people and has three auditoriums. When listening and observing the artists who were performing, it became apparent that the love of the art form was evident and that practice was the driving force that got them to that stage.

No pastor should be concerned about his/her survival power of leadership in pulpits. The pulpit is Holy ground. Those who are privileged to stand there should understand that a powerful and sovereign God granted them just an infinitesimal pinch of power to be used according to the Holy Scriptures and guided by the person of the Holy Spirit.

The clergywomen and the Site Team view the pulpit as Holy ground and acknowledge that it is a place where respect and love of God and his people can be demonstrated. We would not do anything to desecrate that image. Clergywomen understand gender issues through life experiences. They offer information and resources to help bring healing in the natural and the spiritual. Analyzing the challenges in which the gender of the person bringing God's word is either suspect (not called by God) or totally unacceptable injures those already suffering to even a greater degree, because they see the anger, ignorance and conflict among Christians. This kind of behavior is proof that well prepared and empowered clergywomen must stand in the gap with skills, love and the sword of truth. Interested congregants realize that the PPF is not trying to oust male pastors from the pulpit; we want the opportunity to bring a message from a place that is regarded as Holy with loving respect for God and the pastor. In an abstract or alternative community, the Practice Preaching Forum has created a niche in the fight for social justice. Young girls growing up

in the church and community have role models that they can see, touch and interact with.

While social justice was not our main focus, psychological, religious, historical and cultural dynamics are integrated into my vision whether I need it to be there or not.

The core or basic challenge to the vision is to stay as true to the purpose of the Practice Preaching Forum as humanly possible. Another part of that purpose is to see it grow and develop just as those who are silent or invisible in the pews grow and develop by finding their own voice. Furthermore, to grasp and embrace the empowering energy that is given only through the indwelling of the blessed Holy Spirit at the project site and to Christians everywhere. I envision the analysis of the challenge as a spiritual business plan. Each part must be examined. There are many parts to it therefore, we must take a systems approach though it was embedded in the project from the beginning. Each part must be examined, the objectives must be identified; the location established, logistics charted and assignments distributed or divided according to skills and abilities. Financial plans/budgets must be formulated and contingency plans set in place. Strategies and intelligent use of marketing tools are crucial. While there is more ink needed (drafted ideas), the most important part is the people. Analyzing the means, methods and tools to begin this project is the shortest distance between implementing a vision and the success of it is a straight line to the goal because this was a God guided plan.

In the United States research revealed that there is nothing on the scale of the Practice Preaching Forum. Clergywomen in the community are waiting to become a part of it. There are courses taught in seminaries and universities in homiletics all year round. There are preaching clubs that meet intermittently. However, “practice”, training in public speaking, performance, sermon writing and a permanent practice site is the linchpin for success.

Clergywomen are just asking for equality in their own churches from those who have in one manner or another experienced inequality at some period walking in this life, and remembered what it feels like to be invisible. Clergywomen are daughters, sisters, friends and also mothers of some who would embrace sexism in the house of God.

In analyzing this project carefully, hope for success was evident as each part was implemented and scrutinized. Proof of practice and ability was a strong motivational tactic for getting this forum space and time at the dialogue table. It was important to allow common sense to prevail and to recognize that all common sense was not at all common.

I am an associate minister at One Offering Tabernacle of God, Sunday School Teacher and Director of Education. My early church experience emanated from the St. Paul Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York. I was baptized there at the age of thirteen and entered into the leadership training program for youth. I was active in many church auxiliaries including the Sunday School well into my adult years and was also married there.

My role as a leader in organizing the Practice Preaching Forum has been a wonderful learning experience. I learned to delegate reasonable responsibility to others with skills that I did not possess. I learned to use disappointments as building blocks to the next task. I learned that every “no” is not always written in stone. I learned how important it is to be transparent, especially as a leader. I learned how important it is to do follow-up when scheduling appointments. I learned how easy it is to obtain respect by giving respect. The process taken on this journey of learning helped me to create the Practice Preaching Forum. The challenge that was inherent in creating the forum also increased my spiritual maturity. I selected the transformational leadership style because it was important that those ministers in

the project share in a journey that promoted honesty and cohesiveness that could outlast any form of divisiveness. Northouse claims, “As its name implies, transformational leadership is a process that changes and transform individuals. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings.”¹⁰

Clergywomen are just asking for equality in their churches from those who have experienced inequality at some point in this life, and remembered what it felt like to feel invisible. I think that this argument alone is a compelling reason for thinking individuals to support the Practice Preaching Forum. The success of the project depended upon the ministers participating according to individual desire for the project to come to fruition with the help of God.

¹⁰ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice 3rd Ed.* (Thousand Oaks, Cal: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004), 169.

CHAPTER 3

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Mentally, I began constructing a plan to implement the project when it was birthed in my heart. I believe that it was ordained by God that this project meet the needs of the people as well as spiritually inspired prophetic spokespersons today. The first step in the methodology was to be open and honest as I shared my thoughts and ideas with the site team and to bring my aural skills up to optimum level in order to properly receive their input. During this first stage, the primary goals were to build a strong foundation to implement our plan and to remain true to the purpose of the Practice Preaching Forum that is in part, to nurture, hone and develop, the teaching and preaching skills of Forum participants, with the gospel message that brings hope to those that are bruised in my church and the community.

In the second stage of implementation, our plan had to be structured in a manner that could be replicated. We needed an instrument that would demonstrate if what the clergywomen desired was compatible with what was acceptable to the congregation, community and the pastor. It was decided that a survey would be useful in interpreting the opinions of those who would benefit from the Practice Preaching Forum. A population or universe was taken and a sample selected because we needed to know if congregations in Cambria Heights would be accepting and supportive of a group of clergywomen who met on a regular basis to practice preaching. The congregation at the project site was used as the

sample. A sample is a part of the population (universe) and the results must reflect as closely as possible the characteristics of the population. We also agreed that handing out flyers, in addition to church announcements, was a good idea to promote awareness as well as placing posters in the windows of local businesses where permitted.

It was our desire to bring in professional evaluators from Toastmasters International, including a grammarian to assist in evaluating the preaching styles and sermons. Toastmasters International is a non-profit educational organization that seeks to develop communication and leadership skills in their members. A series of workshops and mini community forums were organized as promotion of the project to the public, these also served to increase a broader awareness of the project. Modern technology has afforded us the opportunity to create a website and a facebook page. We were also able to avail ourselves of free radio (WBAI FM) advertising and free postings on local/major newspaper bulletin boards.

The final phase in the plan of implementation was the orientation and a teaching series on 1Cor. 14:34, as a prelude to activating training at the project site. The Orthodox Study Bible (OSB) is the only version of the bible used by this writer throughout this work.

The methodology chosen for the survey was quantitative instead of qualitative because the scope and size of the project was not multitudinous. The Site Team and I handed out one hundred and fifteen surveys to members and visitors in the congregation. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were provided. The survey did not address questions of age, marital status, occupation, lifestyle, education or gender. There were no mail-outs or telephone surveys and one hundred percent of those surveyed attended a church or were church members. Seventy-nine instruments were collected or returned to me by mail. When

we examined the use of the qualitative and quantitative designs, the choice was simple. It was agreed that the best research method was quantitative because:

Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned. The advantage of a quantitative approach is that it's possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. This gives a broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously.¹¹

The survey was composed of four categories:-

1. Always 2. Sometimes 3. Never and 4. Don't care

with instructions to encircle only one for each of the following ten questions:

1. Are you participating in this survey as a pastor, minister, priest or layperson?
2. Do you believe that women practicing in a preaching forum can enhance skills that will benefit the church?
3. Does the appearance (hats, colorful attire, clergy garments) hinder the preached word?
4. Is a woman preacher's knowledge about the sermon topic important to you?
5. How often will you attend worship service when a woman preaches or officiates?
6. When you need a minister for a funeral, counseling, Bible Teacher, worship service or wedding, is a woman preacher overlooked?
7. Do you believe that women were also called by God to preach the gospel?
8. Does your interest wane, when listening to women preach a sermon?

¹¹Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods 3rd Edition* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc. 2002), 14.

9. In your view, when women preach from other locations within the church instead of the pulpit, does this signal disrespect or subjugation of women?
10. How do you think a female bible scholar could transform a community? Explain.

There were no questions that were not directly relevant to the growth and good morale within the forum. The questions were designed in order that the respondent's results would not be too vaguely or too sharply (yes/no) defined. Moore concludes, "You don't have to eat the whole ox to know that the meat is tough."¹²

After verifying the number of committed clergywomen to be trained in the project, a selection of professionals (to do workshops/training) and the instruments to be used for evaluation were decided upon. The plan included training in homiletics, domestic violence, grief and bereavement; and training from Toastmasters International to aid in public speaking, under the observation/supervision of a grammarian.

Question 1

The total number in the sample was 79. Of the 79, 76% of the respondents were laypersons, 13% were ministers, 4% were pastors, 4% were evangelist and 1.2652% were priests. It was important to allow the respondents to identify themselves because titles sometimes overlap and take on a different meaning in orders, traditions, authority and doctrines of other denominations. The titles were a major cue in helping to interpret the results. I understand Stone who writes, "The theological resources of tradition are not confined to formal statements about church doctrine. There are traditions of practice that are an important resource for theological reflection in certain churches. Traditions of worship, prayer, poetry,

¹² David S. Moore, *Statistics Concepts And Controversies 4th Edition* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1999), .3.

hymnody, visual arts, and religious drama are examples.”¹³ All of these issues were considered as part of the steps or foundation for the Practice Preaching Forum.

Question 2

The survey showed that 70% of respondents believed that women practicing preaching in a preaching forum could enhance their skills to the point of benefitting the church. 31% felt that it could be beneficial sometimes. Almost ¾ of the respondents would like clergywomen to have better skills. What concern does this issue speak to for the Practice Preaching Forum? There is no disagreement that many in the pews cannot relate to what is preached from the pulpit on Sunday mornings. In addition, Stone suggests, “For example, a pastor may preach a sermon about sin on the Third Sunday of Advent that has no discernible ties with the following week’s sermon on feeding the hungry, and both seem unrelated to the Christmas Eve sermon about the Incarnation.”¹⁴

Question 3

The results here demonstrate that 38% feel that inappropriate or distracting attire hindered the preached word. Four percent (4%) stated that inappropriate attire always hindered the preached word. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the respondents said that the preachers’ attire never hindered the preached word. Four percent (4%) said they did not care about the preacher’s attire. I always viewed wide brimmed hats with colorful feathers and flowers bobbing up and down in the pulpit and in the pews as very distracting. Millinery and Couture was very big business in my former church. A skilled and accomplished milliner

¹³ Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How To Think Theologically* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1996), 49.

¹⁴ Ibid., 83.

earned a very decent income selling church ladies' hats or bonnets. However, 54% of the respondents claimed that the preacher's attire never hindered the preached word.

Question 4

Additionally, 89% thinks that the preacher's knowledge about the text/topic was important. Eleven percent (11%) said sometimes. Close to 90% of the respondents believe as I do that the preacher's knowledge about the text/topic is important. Proctor believes, "A strong proposition and a fitting subject make an excellent beginning. Behind all of this is the assumption that we have a praying, committed preacher in mind, one who is at home with the Bible and who also rejoices to see God's handiwork in nature, who can identify the hand of God reflected in the sciences and in great literature."¹⁵

Question 5

A total of 25% (25.316%) would come to a church service sometimes when a woman preached or officiated, 70% would come when a woman preached or officiate. Five percent (5%) did not care or it did not matter if was male or female preaching or officiating, they would still come to church. Seventy percent (70%) would come however, this might be explored later because it is a fact that the greatest number of church goers in the USA are women. It was a gratifying feeling knowing we could expect support from a large percentage of the sample.

Question 6

Sixty-three percent (63%) agreed that in these important occasions or events, clergymen were often overlooked. Three percent (3%) believed that they are always overlooked for these events, 32% stated that they were never overlooked and 3% of the respondents said that

¹⁵ Samuel D. Proctor, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet* Crafting a Sermon of Authority, (Valley Forge, Pa: Judson Press, 1994), .51.

they did not care. The answers of the respondents identified with our own observation about what was apparent at important occasions or events.

Question 7

A total of eighty-two percent (82.278%) believed that clergywomen are called by God to preach. Seventeen percent (17%) feel that clergywomen were always called by God. One percent (1%) of the respondents said they did not care. Overwhelmingly, the Practice Preaching Forum received a stamp of approval.

Question 8

Twenty-four percent (24%) of the respondents say that their interest does wane. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondents say their interest never waned when a clergywoman preached. If 24% of the respondents waned when a clergywoman preaches then there may be other issues that must be explored.

Question 9

Twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents feel that there is disrespect or subjugation of women. Ten percent (10%) feel that when this occurs disrespect is indicated. Sixty-three percent (63%) said that this is not an indication of disrespect and 1% does not care. The respondents' answers were indicators that there is indecision on location and that a large part of the sample sees or feels that women are disrespected.

Question 10

Question 10 was answered by only 4% of the respondents. The general consensus in this group was that a female bible scholar could transform a community in the following manner:

1. A bible scholar will bring intelligence, love, morals and nurturing as the characteristics people in the community could relate to.

2. A bible scholar will bring new ideas and new method(s) of accomplishing goals.
3. A female bible scholar relates better to other females than to males. They have a better opportunity to import bible truths to the youth.
4. A female bible scholar can help with grant writing to enable the church to gain funding to aid community programs that will bring glory to the Lord.

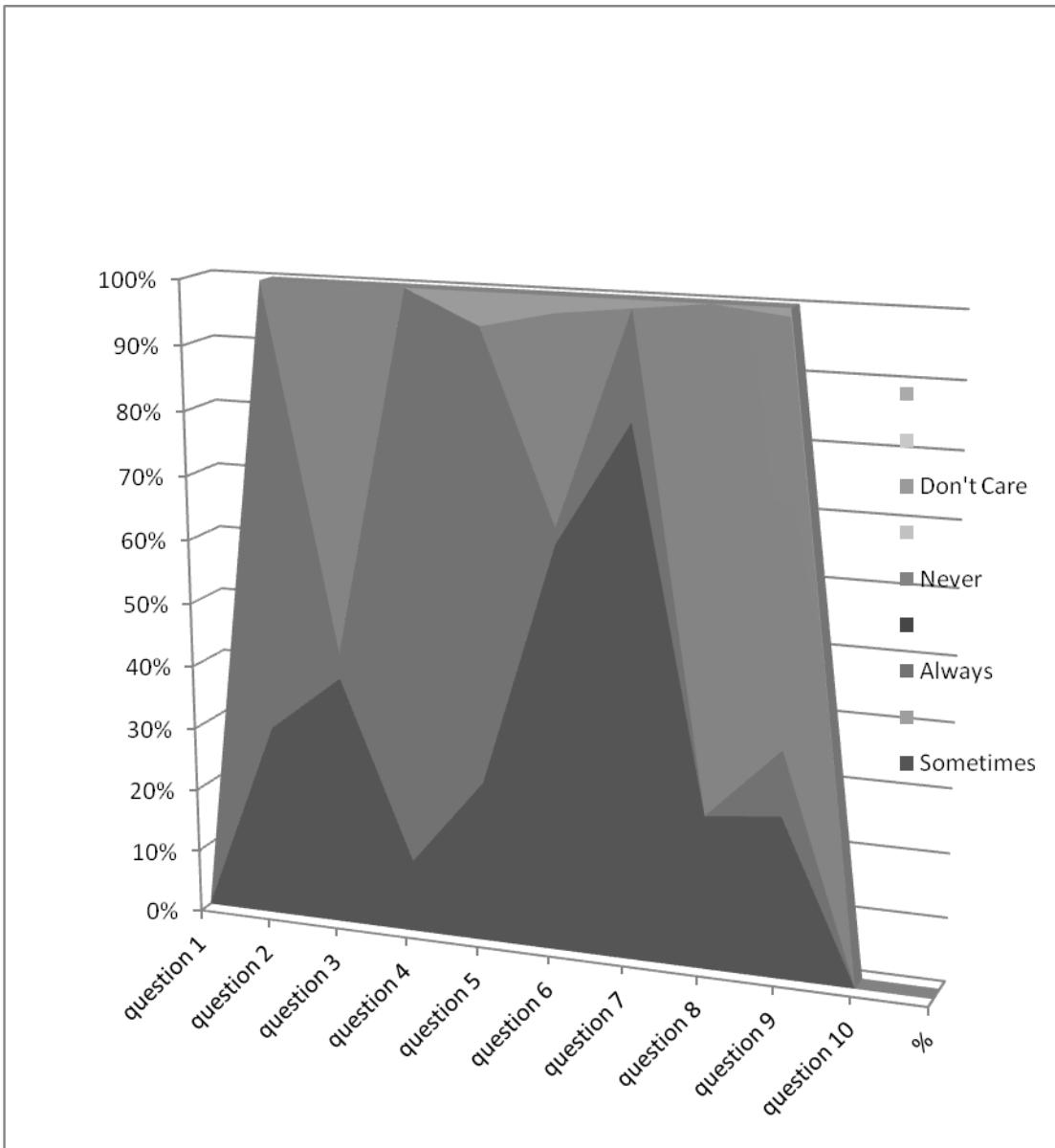
There were notes and comments written in the margins on some of the surveys that were largely ignored. When the survey was analyzed, the results revealed some clear-cut issues and one that was very surprising. It was difficult to imagine that 63% of respondents do not envision women as officiating at life and relational events such as weddings, funerals, christening and other very public venues (question 6). After much prayer, it became clear to me that the notes and comments written in the margins, though unsolicited, could be pertinent as additional information to the surveyed answers when interpreted. These margin notes, which were independent of the original questions, could not be tabulated and interpreted, however they added deeper insight to the results. The following is an abbreviated assessment of the comments written in the margins.

- The pastor's pulpit belongs to him/her and no one else.
- I have no opinion about clergywomen, I never think about them as preachers.
- Men only are called to preach.
- My interest wanes listening to both (him/her), it does not matter.
- Women make better preachers because they are naturally nurturers.

Overall, the responses were supportive and affirming. However, I needed to look at the results again because the results directly impacted the Practice Preaching Forum's success. The questions I asked myself were how could the information collected from the sample

affect the whole population? Did I ask the right questions to obtain the answers needed to draw inference to move in the right direction with this project? I determined that the questions were good enough to support the opinions given and they were not questions that required a yes or no answer. The exception was question 10. The respondents were asked to explain their answers. Only a small percentage of the sample supplied an answer to question 10 with a variety of answers, all in favor of women preachers. One respondent added a synopsis of the Samaritan woman who spread the word about Jesus to an entire community. I realize that the data collected from a survey is not an exact science. However, there were some very important replies that were similar and were in the same grouping that I could draw meaning from. This interpretation of the data could be explained, at least in theory, even when the population is small. Based on the results of the survey, after a second look, I was able to determine that no changes in the interpretations was needed and decided that the original decision was enough to move forward with the Practice Preaching Forum project.

The pre-results of the information gleaned from the survey helped us decide what was necessary in order to launch the Practice Preaching Forum.



The number of responses in percentages for each category

Figure 1

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

This project was implemented in a dry desert by a force (Holy Spirit) sanctioned by God. The dry desert is the place where those who are bruised and wounded sit waiting in the pews with hope, faith and anticipation. The preliminary work of bringing about awareness to the project, identifying the clergypersons, designing registration and orientation, scheduling method, Bill of Rights, and a three part series of sermons on 1Cor. 14:34. Attendance and evaluation instruments were completed and it was time for lights, camera and action (begin the process of training). The dry desert is also a place in the community where God's people are searching for insight into faith and transformation. Through faith, prayer, fasting and preparation, the Practice Preaching Forum became that special entity that was in sync with the needs of a multi-cultural community. One of our clergymen and professional workshop leaders for elocution died and the circle of unity that was developing between Forum participants was temporarily broken. However, we have since bonded together with even a greater sense of conviction and support for each other and implementing this project in a practical and transformational environment.

The Practice Preaching Forum clergymen were a hive of activity, fun and humor whenever we met for training. I love to laugh and I believe that Jesus also had a sense of humor. I have heard arguments from other pastors who feel that Jesus' journey on this earth left no room for amusement of any kind because he had to be about his father's business. I

most certainly disagree with that theory. My position is that Mark 11:13 is only one of many that proves my point. Jesus was hungry and while walking he saw a fig tree in the distance. He went to find fruit on it and finding only the leaves because it was not the season for figs he cursed it from the top down to the roots. We all know that a root system must be healthy in order to bear fruit. In the parable of the laborers in Matt. 20: 1-16, some of the workers toiled in the vineyard all day, some started working earlier, some later and some just a few hours. Yet, they all received the same pay. The story is humorous, even a bit odd by today's standards (I do understand the spiritual implications of this parable). I hope and pray that all pulpits are full, lush and fruitful with the holy word of God and that when clergywomen arrive at the entrance to it, it will not be devoid of fruit.

As an introduction to the Practice Preaching Forum, I wrote a very short parody about a pastor who abhorred women preachers and was supported by the matriarch of the women's committee in the church. The Chairman of the Deacon's Board did not really agree with the stance taken by the pastor but always remained quiet about it. A few people were recruited to fill the acting roles. After the play (part of orientation), a "meet and greet" period commenced.

Church: Holy Patriarchal Help a Sistah Out Cathedral

Pastor: Donald O'Pression

Clergywoman: Imanuella Love

Pew Member: Sister, Gender Issue

Church Committee Representatives

1. Chair Lady-Sylvia Deadly
2. Deacon-Thomas Fool

Mission Statement:

The Holy Patriarchal Help A Sistah Out Cathedral is a safe haven for all who know their place in the Lord. We provide a surplus of generic brochures and pamphlets for free that will fit your every need. There is no reason to disturb the pastor because he always has your best interest strong in his heart. I do not allow clergywomen to preach from my pulpit because it becomes just plain gossip and hearsay and gossip is not allowed in my church. When a woman writes a sermon, it is by intuition and not by the anointing and inspiring revelation of God.

The scene takes place in the office of Pastor, O'Pression with all of the characters.

Sis. Deadly and Deacon Fool (talking at the same time with “yeah, that’s right”), If you let one preach from the pulpit this church will be crawling with them. Deacon fool agrees, yeah that’s right.

Pastor O’Pression: “Don’t we have some brochures explaining the policy of this church? Make it quick. Make it quick.”

Sis. Gender Issue: “Pastor O’Pression, I heard clergywoman Imanuella Love preach at the Practice Preaching Forum. I was feeling isolated, depressed and suicidal but she touched my heart. Those words about the love of Jesus gave me permission to acknowledge that I was an invisible victim and that I did not have to remain in that state. While listening to her sermon I began to feel safe, Halleluiah, in the arms of Jesus. My greatest pain was alleviated when I could approach clergywoman Love and share the things I have been denying to family and friends. Thank God for the Practice Preaching Forum. Now, I don’t have to be voiceless

anymore. My \$35,000 donation to this church does not have to be anonymous either does it? I have found my voice.”

Pastor O’Pression: “Hmmm. Okay, okay, I just heard a word from the Lord in my spirit and I think that this Practice Preaching Forum has a little bit of merit. Clergywoman Love, you can preach next Sunday morning! Remember, always keep our mission statement close to your heart.”

The first training session was a Public Speaking Training Session, it was entitled The Preacher As Communicator. The trainer was a speech facilitator who holds a DTM award (Distinguish Toastmaster). This is the highest award a Toastmaster can earn. Moreover, the recipient (Ms. Louise Manigault, Queens, NY) of such an award had to have presented more than 40 speeches, completed a High Performance leadership project and serve for one year as a District Officer. Each clergyperson was given an assignment one week in advance to write a sermon, with instructions to keep the preaching within a 5-7 minute time limit. Each clergywoman had to deliver an effective sermon utilizing one of the three following oral communication skills:

- **Speak With Knowledge-**The aim of this sermon is to gather accurate, up-to-date information on a subject, to reference and cross reference biblical research to properly exegete the text. The subject should be one of interest to the speaker/preacher as well as the members in the pews. At the conclusion of the sermon, the congregation should gain new insights pertaining to the Gospel.
- **Inspire Your Audience-**The aim of this sermon is to understand the mood and feelings of the audience on a particular occasion (drug and alcohol recovery groups, senior citizens from a senior community center).

- **Make It Persuasive** –The aim of this sermon is to persuade the audience to accept your point of view (the Gospel). Look to appeal to the audience’s self-interest, building a logical foundation for agreement and arousing emotional commitment to the Word.

These three oral communication skills that were suggested by Toastmaster were acceptable and were incorporated into the plans of the forum. In addition, I admonished the clergywomen in the forum to stay true to Jesus Christ and to make wise use of the best information to serve in God’s vineyard. Some tips were given in advance of the sermon and clergypersons were advised that though they were being evaluated, the gift of learning how to give and receive helpful evaluations was like gaining a special key to good sermons.

An evaluator can learn to become a better listener and a more critical thinker in the Practice Preaching Forum. Tips were shared on how to ensure the forum was meeting the needs of its members. The role of an evaluator is to provide honest reaction in a constructive manner to the person’s efforts. The workshop leader stated, “Evaluators should keep in mind that you cannot change the person’s behavior or force the person to accept your ideas and suggested improvements.” It is critical to the clergywomen/clergypersons that they understand this as they practice to empower themselves and those whom they serve. How you phrase your evaluation has as much impact on the speaker or leader as the content of your evaluation. It was imperative that clergywomen know that the Gospel should not be used to make the congregation defensive. If you use words that place others on the defensive, your message is lost. These guidelines and other tips are available for further review.¹⁶

¹⁶ Toastmasters International, *Effective Evaluation: Tips and Techniques For Giving Helpful Evaluations*, (Mission Viejo: CA, Toastmasters International, 2010). Abstract.

Moreover, the presence and evaluation of a grammarian was the highlight of the training session. She provided an instrument to evaluate the preachers' grammar and poise. A grammarian ranks the changing order of words in a sentence because the order changes the meaning. How critical is the Gospel to the listeners who hear but do not understand? The grammarian examines inflections which is the change in the form of a word. The use of function words are noted because they express relationship between various other words in a sentence and suprasegmentals that express meaning and shows contrast in spoken English. By using variations of sound and pause, a speaker can indicate exclamations, questions and statements. The evaluation instrument used here is referred to as the Ah-Counter. The grammarian of record is Kris Watson, Esq. of New York City. At the training session she stated, "The purpose of the Ah-Counter is to note any word or sound used as a crutch by anyone who speaks during a meeting. Repetitive words or phrases may be inappropriate interjections, such as "*I,I*" or "*This means, this means.*" These words and sounds can be annoying to listeners. The Ah-Counter role is an excellent opportunity to practice listening skills. Words such as suprasegmentals function words were used as part of the grammarian's workshop. Suprasegmental is defined as 1. Above, beyond, or in addition to a segment. 2. Linguistics—pertaining to or noting features of speech, as stress pitch, and length, that accompany individual consonants and vowels and may extend over more than one such segmental element; pertaining to junctural and prosodic features.

A timer is a necessary piece of the evaluation process during the preaching of a sermon. The Timer's role helps the preacher to be cognizant of time, his, hers, and the impact on the congregation. All time belongs to God and we should use it wisely. In the Practice

Preaching Forum, sermons were not permitted to go over 10 minutes. However, each clergywoman must be governed by the policies of the denomination they serve.

Commitment to the project means that training in areas other than public speaking is of great importance. The clergywomen at the project site were brought to a heighten awareness and blessed by their participation in an in-depth and provocative domestic violence training session. The broader implications of a domestic violence crime cannot truly be defined because it overlaps into every area of family life. It is recognized today as rape, molestation, bullying, slavery, spousal abuse, elder abuse and even slavery. It also includes invisible women like undocumented aliens and widows (secluded and excluded).

There was a poem in the training packet entitled *He Gave Me Flowers* that highlighted the issues of women who are beaten by husbands/boyfriends and the consequences when they do not seek or accept help.

He Gave Me Flowers

I got flowers today. It wasn't my birthday or any other special day
We had our first argument last night and he said a lot of cruel things
that really hurt me. I know that he is sorry and didn't mean to say the
things he said—because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today. It wasn't our anniversary or any other special day.
Last night he threw me into a wall and then started to choke me.
It seemed like a nightmare but you wake up from nightmares to find
that they aren't real. I woke up this morning sore and bruised all over.
I know he must be sorry—because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today. And it wasn't Valentine's Day or any other special
Day. Last night he beat me and threatened to kill me.
Makeup and long sleeves didn't hide the cuts and bruises this time.
I couldn't go to work because I didn't want anyone to know
But I know he is sorry—because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today and it wasn't Mother's Day or any other special day.
Last night he beat me again and it was much worse than all the other
times. If I leave him what will I do? How will I take care of the kids?

What about money? I'm afraid of him and too scared to leave him!
But he must be sorry—because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today. Today was a very special day
It was the day of my funeral.
Last night he finally killed me. I was beaten to death.
If only I would have gathered enough courage and strength to leave him.

So I got flowers today—for the very last time.

---Anonymous

Clergywomen must show Christian love and have a sensitivity that permeates their sermons as they stand before the people on the congregation floor or from the pulpit.

Domestic Violence literature, brochures and current information were provided in a starter kit for all clergywomen, to aid in providing resources to others. Additional training was provided by ROLO (Remembering Our Loved Ones), a grief and bereavement training program that I created approximately ten years ago. It includes a bereavement kit with information pertaining to planning funerals, hospice/palliative care, DNR (do not resuscitate info), and the role of a proxy representative. This bereavement training program was presented as a power point presentation. All training sessions included a Question and Answer segment. The Practice Preaching Forum is open to all who wish to preach and need a place to practice their preaching.

I've Never Died Before was the introductory line I used for the grief and bereavement training. Ron Klingbeil, a 13 year-old boy dying of leukemia, wrote this letter to doctors and nurses. The Cadillac, Michigan, Evening News published it shortly before his death.

I am dying.... No one likes to talk about such things. In fact, no one likes to talk about. Much at all... I am the one who is dying. I know you feel insecure, don't know what to say, don't know what to do. But please believe me, if you care, you can't go wrong.

Just admit that you care. This is what we search for. We may ask for whys and wherefores, but we don't really want answers. Don't run away. Wait. All I want to know is that there will be someone to hold my hand when I need it. I'm afraid..... I've never died before...

Many people sitting in the pews, sit quietly grieving or mourning. Grief is the painful emotion of sorrow caused by the loss or impending loss of anything that has deep meaning to you and the process of working through the pain of sorrow that follows a significant loss is mourning. Two women lost children many years ago and are still mourning. I wrote an open letter to the clergypersons in the Forum about my own pain, to allow them to view me as a sister in mourning. Others in the Forum lost parents, brothers/sisters to death as well.

My letter:-

Dear Clergywomen/Clergypersons,

I have lived with grief and sorrow. It is an unimaginable, penetrating and surreal-like sorrow that has the ability to cast you into a devastating mindset that cannot be explained, understood, categorized or denied. Sometimes, the memory of this unwanted sorrow comes upon me suddenly and vanishes just as suddenly. It is like a flood that totally overwhelms me when I think of my mother, sister and brothers (three brothers). This is my experience and we can come to the table and talk about *your* experience at any time. There is no time frame for grief and mourning to cease. Please know that! However, a relationship with God will and can fill most of the void. God knows and understands our sorrow. Isaiah 43:2 reminds us that, "If you pass through water, I am with you; and the rivers shall not overflow you. If you pass through fire, you shall not be burned up, nor shall the flame consume you."

Yours truly,

The training commenced with the stages of grief. Every clergyperson needed to be acquainted with the stages of grief because understanding is the gateway to communicating with survivors through the word of God when they are part of the community at large or those women and girls languishing in the pews. If we can begin with denial as the first stage, we can see how a battered woman/man responds to horrendous abuse as if it never happened when the abuser is apologetic and seemingly kind. It is almost like a beautiful and balmy summer day after a dark and destructive hurricane. The memory of the damage appears to dissipate as the debris is all cleared up, until the next time.

Anger is the second stage and is directed toward God for taking their loved one. Bargaining is a stage of desperation where there is a plea to solicit a miracle from God. It also helps to relieve the anguish of dying. An older person's sense of helplessness may turn to rage. Bargaining is usually done in secret. Depression is no stranger to sorrow. It creeps into our lives when we are in pain emotionally, physically and spiritually. The price that is paid by many who languish in the darkness of depression cannot be properly documented here. Kubler-Ross lists the six stages of grief as follows:

1. Denial and isolation
2. Bargaining
3. Depression
4. Acceptance
5. Hope

She says, "These means will last for different periods of time and will replace each other or exist at times sided by side.¹⁷ However, there is an elephant in the room and that elephant is

¹⁷ Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D. *On Death And Dying* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. 1970), 38-156.

denial. The elephant in the room is super-large and in truth cannot be missed. However, we pretend that the elephant is not there. This is how we avoid dealing with denial. A copy of the poem, "There Is An Elephant In The Room" was part of the training packet that was given to every clergyperson at the training site.

The Elephant In the Room

By Terry Kettering

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with, "How are you?" and "I'm fine," and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter. We talk about the weather. We talk about work. We talk about everything else, except the elephant in the room.

There's an elephant in the room.
We all know it's there. We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds. For, you see, it is a very large elephant.
It has hurt us all.

But we don't talk about the elephant in the room.
Oh, please say her name.
Oh, please say "Barbara" again.
Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.

For if we talk about her death, perhaps we can talk about her life.
Can I say her name to you and not have you look away?
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me....
alone....
in a room....
with an elephant.

The training also covered the impact of recent or previous deaths, relationship with the deceased, support systems and business decisions help for the survivors. The clergypersons in the project experienced first-hand what it was like when a sudden death within the forum impacted our group; the female bishop in the Practice Preaching Forum died suddenly. The session on sudden death was very beneficial because we experienced it

together. We gained a deeper understanding of how support and presence act as aids to someone who is grieving. Murder or trauma did not influence any emotional hurdle for us in our church sister's death and that removed other issues that we might possibly have to address unnecessarily. There are layers and layers of complexity in the training for grief and bereavement. Most importantly, some bereavement information was condensed to cover what to do to help a survivor and what *not* to say to avoid offending a griefer. What to do was outlined in the following manner:

1. When a child dies
2. Grieving teenagers
3. Violent deaths
4. Suicide
5. Grieving young children
6. Euthanasia
7. A Good Death (recommended this book)¹⁸

A list of resources were made available to clergypersons in the Practice Preaching Forum. Members in the project learned that a "ministry of presence" was prized above all else when grief and mourning is experienced by others. We learned that one's presence does help to bring healing to the grieving process.

The Practice Preaching Forum operates in a socially diverse community; therefore, possessing a basic knowledge of social behavior in different cultures was profitable emotionally and spiritually to clergypersons in the Forum because, "In quite a few cultures, anger and aggression are part of mourning (Rosenblatt, Walsh, & Jackson, 1976).

¹⁸ Charles Meyer, *A Good Death* (Mystic, Ct. Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 5.

Dominant American culture does not define most losses as a matter for anger or aggression. This may leave Americans ill-prepared to deal with people for whom anger and aggression are culturally normal in bereavement.”¹⁹ I designed a social and cultural awareness questionnaire to help clergywomen self-analyze their attitudes and behavior while exercising a ministry of presence to those with different beliefs about death.

I. Self-Awareness A.

- | | <u>False</u> | <u>True</u> | |
|----|--------------|-------------|---|
| 1. | F | T | Some cultures associate yellow flowers with death. |
| 2. | F | T | Valuables will be distributed to family and friends when death is near. |
| 3. | F | T | Funeral service begins when a garment or a black ribbon is cut. |
| 4. | F | T | Death is like a long happy dream. |
| 5. | F | T | There is nothing shameful about suicide. |

II. Self-Awareness B.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 6. | F | T | There is no fear of hell or hope of going to heaven. |
| 7. | F | T | Children and adults learn to talk about death quite easily and frequently. |
| 8. | F | T | Proper burial and worship service of the departed influences the health, safety and prosperity of the family. |
| 9. | F | T | Herbs and candles will be lighted underneath a raised casket. |
| 10. | F | T | Only classical music and dance allowed at the funeral. |

¹⁹Donald P. Irish, Kathleen F. Lundquist & Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, *Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death, and Grief: Diversity in Universality* (Philadelphia, Pa: Taylor & Francis Publishers, 1993), 16.

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 11. F | T | Anger and aggression are a part of mourning |
| 12. F | T | A dog transports the soul of the dead to the afterlife. |

In grief and bereavement, having basic knowledge of social behavior in varying cultures is profitable emotionally and spiritually to clergywomen everywhere. To be cognizant of the social and cultural environment allows a ministry of presence to operate in full force.

The narrative of Irish, Lundquist and Nelsen provided the answers to the yellow flowers (p.271), no fear of heaven and hell (p153), a dog that transport the soul to the afterlife (p.71), deaths equated with happy dreams (p. 139), comfortable discussions of death among parents and children (p. 144), and the dead's influence upon the living (p.83). I have attended many Jewish services and activities therefore I believed it to be beneficial to share that :

The Jewish funeral service begins with the cutting of a garment or black ribbon. This first rite symbolizes the individual being “cut away” from loved ones. For children, the cut is made above the heart. For all others, it is done on the right side. At the funeral, psalms of comfort are recited, especially the 90th and the 23rd. Those readings, as well as others chosen by the officiate, or perhaps even newly prepared by the rabbi, are then followed by a eulogy that offers personal words about the individual’s life, achievement, losses and loves. It was important to understand that a significant and normal part of life is death.²⁰

Another of the important and well received training sessions of the Practice Preaching Forum was homiletics. As a definition, it is simply preparation for writing and preaching a sermon. Realistically, there is nothing simple about the preparation of a sermon because the Holy Spirit must lead/guide the preacher on how to preach to a culturally diverse congregation. When we preach the gospel or the good news of Jesus, we must always be

²⁰Ibid 119.

conscious of cultural nuances. The homiletics trainer was Rev. Grace M. Emanuel, Executive Minister/Minister of Christian Education of the Co-op City Baptist Church, Bronx, New York. While homiletics is great for teaching how to preach, the call from God to preach must be received and accepted. The Practice Preaching Forum is empowering women to break the bonds of silence in the church, and how to be submissive to the powerful message of Jesus that is quoted in Joel chapter three. It explains that the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (male and female).

The Bill of Rights for the Practice Preaching Forum is as follows:

1. Commit yourself to God, self-care and family.
2. Choose where the Practice Preaching Forum rates in priority in your Christian walk.
3. Exchanging scheduling dates to practice among each other should be a reasonable pleasure.
4. Invite friends, family or neighbors to attend sessions.
5. Punctuality is equated with respect for each other.
6. Commit to practicing your preaching for personal growth and not for the number of attendees. Remember where two or three are gathered God is in the midst.
7. Attending the Practice Preaching Forum is voluntary.
8. A free-will offering will be taken.
9. Practice sessions will be on every second and fourth Friday evening from 7:30 P.M. - 9P.M.
10. Advice is not given, only evaluations by professionals.

We possess a permanent site to practice, permanent days and time frame. We also have professional instructors/teachers, evaluators and a waiting list. The following are my preaching outlines for the three series teaching on 1Cor. 14:34.

Sermon 1

Subject: Where is Peter? Woman, Go Tell His Disciples and Peter!

Text: Mark 16 - 17

A. Peter's Absence At the Tomb

1. His relationship with Jesus.
2. Paved the way for a woman as a witness.
3. The call to spread the Gospel given to a woman at the tomb (Mark 16:1-9).
4. A woman became the first preacher in the New Testament to spread the “Good News.”

B. Messenger/Message

1. Angel sitting (Matt. 28:5).
2. The Guards (Matt. 28:11).
3. Jesus (Matt 28:9).
4. The earthquake - A sign of our Lord’s great victory over death (Matt. 28:2).
5. The women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary witnessed red Jesus’ death, burial, empty tomb, the angel’s message and experienced red fear and great joy. A woman carried the word of Jesus’ resurrection and created a symbolic earthquake for future generations.

Sermon 2

Subject: Silence vs. Absolute Silence

Text: Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17-18; Prov. 21:23

A. Silence

1. Signs of Silence (not submission), prudence and cautious foreseeing.
2. Staying out of trouble (Prov. 21:23).
3. Silence in wisdom.

B. Church Equality For Women

1. Neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3:28).
2. Historical evidence of women's roles.
3. Pitiful or powerful, you choose your time (Eccl. 3:7).
4. We are all ambassadors of Christ and should speak as one.

Sermon 3

Subject: Daughters of Zelophehad: Journey From Exclusion to Victory

Text: Num. 27: 2-4

1. Making A Decision
2. Gathering Support
3. Faith Courage and Action
4. Support from the Patriarch, fast forward to the present

The squeaky hinge gets the oil-the sisters receive recognition and approval from (God) and the property they fought for.

SPEAKER'S EVALUATION

Name: _____ Date: _____

Sermon Title: _____

Project: (underline One)

Speaking with Knowledge Inspire Your Audience Make It Persuasive

Basics:

Evaluator: _____

Did the speaker stay within the 5-7 minute guidelines? _____

Did the speaker meet the objectives of the sermon? _____

Was the sermon well organized? _____

Did the speaker make eye contact with the audience? _____

Did the speaker use vocal variety to emphasize points? _____

Did the speaker use appropriate body language? _____

Did the speaker make a good appearance? _____

Specifics:

1. What did you like about the sermon presentation?

2. What suggestions do you have for improvement?

3. Closing Remarks.

TALK OF THE TOWN TOASTMASTER' CLUB

Name: _____ Date _____

Ah-Counter/Grammarian Role

Helping members off their crutches

The purpose of the Ah-Counter is to note any word or sound used as a crutch by anyone who speaks during the meeting. Words may be inappropriate interjections, such as *and, well, but, so and you know*. Sounds may be *ah, um* or *er*. You should also note when a speaker repeats a word or phrase such as “I, I” or “This means, this means.” These words and sounds can be annoying to listeners. The Ah-Counter role is an excellent opportunity to practice your listening skills.

Project Speakers

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Evaluators

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Reflecting upon the text in Steinke’s book and the context of wholeness as an introduction to a healthy congregation, I could envision this idea clearly because it mirrored a part of what the Practice Preaching Forum stands to develop. He made certain that readers understood that his view was in relation to a systems approach. He then began to peel back the parts to show the reader that the individual members of a con-gregation must have the ability and willingness to be supportive of each other rather than to think only of themselves if that congregation is to become healthy or maintain healthiness. He used a number of metaphors to bring clarity or to get across his point. Steinke talked about how “Organizations face forces that are “alien” to their integrity or mission. They too need immune capacities.”²¹ However, before introducing that statement he discussed “mini-diseases,” the immune system and how a vaccination is an insertion of a weak, tired virus into the body. He then lets the reader know that the body he is referring to is the body of Christ (the church). He claims that alien forces are the seeds or variables that are injected into the church by members who are concerned only for themselves (looks out for their own skin).

The author shares some powerful insights that were beneficial to the Practice Preaching Forum. This project is an in house (church site) and an out of the house (community prototype). Clergywomen could not function effectively if they cared only for themselves and not for those who languish in the pews. His view of an organization works very well for The One Offering Tabernacle of God because we too believe that the church is not just another organization. The Lord Jesus Christ has given the promise of the Holy Spirit “to lead you into all truth” (Jn. 16:13). The church is a dynamic organism, the living Body of Jesus Christ.

²¹ Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, Inc. 2006), 17.

The Practice Preaching Forum wants to energize the congregation and to interact with them through the preached word and the Holy Spirit. The church is a Holy, living, breathing organism, aiding and building broken spirits where no other help abounds. Removing or solving the conflicts caused by viruses of selfishness, jealousy and ignorance helps us to stay on a path of confidence and cohesiveness or commitment in the perfecting of the forum. As a leader, it is important to have commitment from the members and Steinke nails it (goes directly to the point) when he talks about a commitment being an investment and creating an outcome equal to a great investment.

At the very first meeting of the Site Team, my aim was to solicit only those who were willing to commit for the duration of the project. I would be amiss if I did not mention viruses such as boredom, overworked/too tired, depression, which could creep into the team and cause dissension. I believe that commitment helps to keep those negative offerings at bay and allows each of us room for healing and loving grace to help others.

The Practice Preaching Forum members take practicing their preaching seriously. It would be very naïve to think that every clergywoman views preaching as a Holy Vocation. In order to love God and abide by the Spirit, the PPF purposely and consciously takes preaching seriously. “If we seriously want to express the Christian message with power, we must make prayer and meditation a living part of our beings. Every day we must sit by ourselves alone to do some thinking on the issues to gain the insight needed for effective preparation. Each day, we must kneel by ourselves alone to do some dialoguing with God for divine power for effective proclamation.”²² The clergywomen who come to the Practice Preaching Forum have a sense of community and personal moral consciousness in their daily

²² Katie Geneva Cannon, *Teaching Preaching* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. 2007), 45.

walk with service to God. They are keenly aware of the diverse cultures in and near our project site and revel in the joy to work in God's vineyard.

Finally, the joy comes in seeing the Practice Preaching Forum go from training to action in the community of faith; a personal exhibition of practice and power being proclaimed from the pulpit in a graceful, yet dynamic pulling on the heartstrings of the listeners and the hearers in the congregation. Whenever we help someone in or outside of our congregation it molds us a little more in God's spiritual image in order that we become more like Christ. The more we are able to manage our lives the greater blessing we can become to others. Time management and sleep is very important in our lives - though it is seldom possible to do both consistently. The members of the Practice Preaching Forum speak truth to each other. As a postscript to this project, I am blessed beyond measure.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIOLOGICAL

The message of the Gospel has the power to break all social barriers and boundaries because it is a message that demonstrates care for humankind. The efforts of the Practice Preaching Forum (PPF) to stimulate engagement of those in the community was cultivated simply through friendly social relationships by extended warm invitations to fellowship one with the other. We began pre-Sunday School breakfast noshes in our own house (church); these were ice-breakers (ways to introduce strangers) which created an atmosphere of warmth and familiarity. This practice of serving breakfast before Sunday School classes was not just for new members or those who decided to just walk in, but also for longtime members who have seen or sat next to each other Sunday after Sunday but never had a conversation. On comfortable, summer Sundays, before Sunday School, we set up tables outside of the church and served coffee and donuts free to all who passed by and was accepting of it. We hoped that our PPF efforts to accomplish this breaking down of barriers or boundaries was interpreted as hands-on demonstration that a part of Christian teaching is inclusiveness and Christian fellowship within a context of charity, excellence and clarity.

Anthropologist have a great deal to say about human beings in relation to race, environment, physical characteristics, classification and the labels placed upon the human population, and the Practice Preaching Forum is listening because knowledge and understanding of differences may bring communities together in worship and respect. The

Forum desires that pastors, clergymen and clergywomen of various cultures, ethnicities and denominations have this practice preaching experience to enable him/her to know and share a personal involvement within the Forum environment. Even if it is viewed as just a learning experiment, positive outcomes emerged and negative exposures were healed and dispelled.

It is not uncommon for social and cultural ideas or issues to clash, when this happens the behavior of people is reflected through social factors such as class, age, gender, morals, language, and ways of thinking. Those differences, however counterproductive need not prevent discussion. Frequently, a little conflict may aid in breaking down barriers and producing discussions among people who may have perceived notions about each other.

Race and ethnicity still divide today without any logical explanation other than hate and silence from our church leaders, political and economic giants in society (the wealthy). Anderson declares that,

Within sociology, the terms *ethnic*, *race*, *minority*, and *dominant group* have very specific meaning, different from the meanings these terms have in common usage. These concepts are important in developing a sociological perspective on racial and ethnic stratification.

An ethnic group is a social category of people who share a common culture---for example, a common language or dialect; a common religion; and common norms, practices, customs, and history.²³

The Practice Preaching Forum is aware that “diversity dissention” (my terminology) abounds even within cultures and that there is no magic bullet or permanent solution in all of society to fix this presently. Fortunately, practice places no heavy burdens on class, race, ethnicity or culture when it comes to preaching the Gospel. Jesus said, “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). We are also told in Gal. 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor

²³ Margaret L. Andersen and Howard F. Taylor, *Sociology The Essentials* (Belmont, CA.: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 235.

Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This Forum is a group that transcended the chains (prejudices) that bound by allowing each person to practice preaching without condemnation and armed with understanding and camaraderie. Was this a small step toward social equality? Yes! There was no room for sexism or classism.

Sociology is defined as the process by which social expectations are taught and learned. There is no scholastic aptitude examination, physical, blood test or financial statement needed to be a part of the Forum. As a leader, if I am to believe the above definition, then to be effective and hands-on (working directly with people) a true open door policy, free of biases must be exhibited. In this regard, the PPF used workshops and cultural brunches to introduce cultural culinary sumptuous surprises as one key to unlocking religious and ethnic differences.

In the book *Cultural Anthropology*, Robbins says,

Or take the area of food. No society accepts all items in their edible universe as “good to eat.” Only a relatively few items are so designated. Insects such as grub, beetles, and ants are acceptable fare in some societies, while people in others regard eating insects with horror. Americans generally do not define insects as food (although federal regulations do allow a certain percentage of insect matter to be included in processed food). Most Americans like and are encouraged to drink milk, although some people in China consider milk undrinkable, while the Chinese practice of raising dogs for meat is repulsive to most Americans. American children who have raised pet guinea pigs would have a hard time accepting the Peruvian practice of raising guinea pigs for food. Many American tastes in food originate in biblical definitions of what is considered edible and inedible. Thus, of edible land animals, the book of Leviticus says that they must chew their cud and have split hoofs, consequently eliminating not only pig, but camel and rock badger as well. Of animals of the water, edible things must have scales and fins, removing from a biblical diet such things that have wings and fly are legitimate dining fare,

eliminating penguin, ostrich, and cassowary. Thus, Human beings create and define for themselves what they may eat and what they may not eat independent of what is or is not truly edible.²⁴

I reminded myself that the PPF has a permanent place to practice which also translates into a place to talk over lunch or breakfast because food is an essential part of one's culture and a perfect way to introduce special get-together neighborhood klatches. Understanding the ethnic make-up in and near the project was helpful in planning advertising campaigns to keep a steady dose of public awareness flowing for the PPF. The United States Census completed a Comparison Classification Survey and it identified systemically the various races (see Table1) within the U.S. borders. An interesting fact about this data is that it is almost identical to the community at the project site. The information was extremely beneficial in creating workshops and seminars because it was an opportunity to select and prepare dishes that were everyday fare for any group without ignorance or offending (no pork, no fish without scales). The Practice Preaching Forum is really a very simple project which no one, based upon present knowledge, was doing. There are ten points we kept in mind to maintain success. In its simplicity we:

1. Kept it simple.
2. Accepted responsibility when necessary.
3. Remained focused on the goals for the Forum.
4. Continued listening and looking for improvement.
5. Acknowledged that the clergymen and those who were silent in the pews are the most important element in the Forum.
6. Care deeply about each other in the Forum.

²⁴ Richard H. Robbins, *Cultural Anthropology*, (Itasca, IL.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1997), 6.

7. Give respect to the pastors even those with the patriarchal (disease) disposition.

Remember, they are also passionate about their beliefs.

8. Inclusiveness means humankind.

9. The most important tool in the Forum is the Bible.

10. We must be in favor of reaching success step by step.

We are the children of God and the body of Christ. The revelations come as we discover how much we have in common and how alike we are as spiritual beings Brueggemann says, “In Luke 4:18-19 he announces that a new age is beginning, but that announcement carries within it a harsh criticism of all those powers and agents of the present order.”²⁵

I prefer to think of the Practice Preaching Forum as a part of an alternative community because it is an example of new change that is totally inclusive and non-judgmental of cultural and social differences. The Practice Preaching Forum provides a platform where God’s people are free to be “themselves” in the preaching of the Bible. What do we have in our present society that offers this kind of community in a forum setting? Nothing! The Practice Preaching Forum is a haven for learning, practicing and breaking down barriers in a manner that creates spiritual and brotherly/sisterly bonding.

²⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd, Ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 84.

Table 1. Comparisons of U.S. Census Classifications, 1890-2000

Census Date	White	African American	Native American	Asian American	Other Categories
1890	White	Black	Indian	Chinese	
		Mulatto	Indian	Japanese	
		Quadroon			
		Quadroon			
1900	White	Black	Indian	Chinese	
				Japanese	Other
1910	White	Black			
		Mulatto	Indian	Chinese	
				Japanese	Other
1920	White	Black	Indian	Chinese	Mexican
		Mulatto		Japanese	Other
1930	White	Negro	Indian	Chinese	
				Filipino	
				Hindu	
				Korean	
1940	White	Negro	Indian	Chinese	Other
				Japanese	
				Filipino	
				Korean	
1960	White	Negro	American	Chinese	Hawaiian
			Indian	Japanese	Other
				Filipino	
1970	White	Negro or	Indian	Chinese	Hawaiian
		Black	(American)	Japanese	Other
			Aleut	Filipino	
			Eskimo		
1980	White	Black or	Indian	Chinese	Hawaiian
		Negro	(American)	Japanese	Guamanian
			Aleut	Filipino	Samoan
				Korean	Other
				Vietnamese	
1990	White	Black or	Indian	Chinese	Hawaiian
		Negro	(American)	Japanese	Guamanian
			Eskimo	Filipino	Samoan
			Aleut	Korean	Asian or
				Asian Indian	Pacific Islander
				Vietnamese	Other
2000	White	Black or	American	Chinese	Native Hawaiian
		African	Indian	Japanese	Other Pacific Islander
		American	Alaskan	Filipino	Other Pacific Islander
			Native	Korean	
				Asian Indian	
				Vietnamese	

In 2000, individuals selected more than one racial category. Only 2% did. Hispanics are listed "Other."

Source: Richard H. Robbins, *Cultural Anthropology*, (Itasca: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1997), 7.

Free access to a community based educational and highly valuable project like the Practice Preaching Forum allows participants to network with those who possess information, talent, mentoring skills and referrals for all societal ills. It removes an economic barrier because there are no fees or penalties for members in the church or community. The problem of language, accents or dialects is minimal in nature because there are members in the PPF who are part of the great cultural “melting pot” in America. Understanding came about by patience, listening and being non-critical of many who just want to preach or preach better. Clergywomen who used discernment helped others through the vehicle of spiritual guidance. We all worked hard to maintain our own identities in such a diverse and powerfully exciting environment because the social order of society in general had to be placed at bay in order to stay true to excellence and effective preaching. We did not want political, economic and social differences to thwart our progress. Making decisions was not difficult because practicing preaching is the “twin” to Religious education which continues to be a powerful and effective tool in addressing issues prevalent in society.

What are the political, social, economic and cultural biases or ramifications to the Practice Preaching Forum? Consider racial and cultural stereotyping in many churches (cliques) and neighborhoods populated with small prejudice exclusive groups and how they impact the society as a whole. There may be some who desire to become a part of the Practice Preaching Forum however, prejudice and any residual (antebellum) stereotypical behavior is persona non grata (unwelcomed).

One of the things that cultures have in common is music. Music breaks down barriers smoothly and without prejudice. I remember attending a show at the 1,232 seat Nederlander Theatre on Broadway in New York City. The featured artist was Lena Horne,

an African American singer, actress and activist, now deceased. During her lifetime, she became a major nightclub attraction in the United States and Europe. Seated next to me on my left was a family from Canada. To my right were two gentlemen from the Ukraine. The audience was very diverse and the love for this black artist and her music permeated the atmosphere. It was so amazing that people came from near and far for a *one night only* performance. Race and cultural differences did not matter. When the house lights dimmed, Lena Horne stepped onto the stage and before she could utter a single note, the applause commenced and continued into a deafening sound for approximately ten minutes. Adult men and women were jumping up and down. It was an enviable zero stereotypical culture moment (the absence of hate, intolerance and ignorance).

It is my desire to always have zero enviable prejudice free time in the Practice Preaching Forum. Perhaps I am naive to expect Christian music to bring about that kind of change in folks, yet I am reminded of how the angels sang when Jesus the Christ was born and the world has never been the same. I believe that music is in our deoxyribose nucleic acid (DNA, the genetic code for all living forms). I have seen this music of the heart move people during a blackout in the largest populous city in the USA (1997, NYC). The stories of how total strangers helped fellow human beings during that period have been documented, and changed an entire city, be it for a short time only. The Word of God is stronger, richer and more powerful than any blackout or resumed demonstrations of hate. What I learned from that blackout proved that people want to love and care for each other however, a spirit of evil is still very prevalent and the Bible does address it. People also practice the hate they have learned. The Practice Preaching Forum will show that we care for all people but especially for those languishing in the pews and are unable to hear the music.

The political and economic climate may have a peripheral effect on the Practice Preaching Forum just as all of the goods and services in the USA make up the gross national product demonstrating a negative or positive effect. This new and alternative system identified here as the PPF can be affected as stated earlier in a peripheral manner but not in its purpose or its resolve to be inclusive of all people. I have stated over and over again that the clergypersons in the PPF are a caring, loving and giving group of people who love the Lord. They are warm, patient, welcoming and non-judgmental. This allows me to agree with Hopkins when he says, “Consequently, the divine act of giving also entrusts us with stewardship, or a responsibility for that which we have been given. Stewardship obligates the communal owners of the common wealth to cherish wealth and resources for the attainment of group and individual survival and advancement as recipients and guardians of creation, humans are obligated to participate in active involvement with creation, including sharing and service to the neighbor as signs of thanks for the abundance received from a power greater than human energies.”²⁶

I am under no such illusion concerning the racism, cultural and stereotypical dynamics of exclusion in America today, yet in a small church in Cambria Heights, New York, an awesome and vibrant PPF is in healthy form.

One of the perks of the Practice Preaching Forum was forming mentorships and networking opportunities. Another is a personal balanced outcome. A balanced outcome is one in which all parties involved experience a positive outcome in one’s preaching experience. It was quite remarkable to discover that my idea of a Practice Preaching Forum has been successful. My interaction with more than one male pastor allowed me to see who

²⁶ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 2005) 94.

understands that the Practice Preaching Forum can be a tool and even a bridge to bring about change in church polity, increase self-esteem and establish a new paradigm for pastors and clergywomen. The clergywomen have enjoyed their role in the Forum because practicing created preparedness that empowered them to transform lives.

CHAPTER 6

HISTORIORITY

My genesis experience in meeting a woman preacher was in the early 1950's. As I jumped rope on the sidewalk in front of a storefront church on a Sunday morning, I could see a man playing the organ, through the open door and a woman beating the drums. My steps were perfectly and rhythmically in tune with the beat of the drums. Suddenly, the music ceased and the drumming was silent. A woman stood up. She was wearing a long, white summer dress that fell to her ankles and a white rag tied around her head that covered her hair. She entered the pulpit and began talking about a man from Galilee and the word "Jesus" was in almost every sentence. I stood outside of the door, watched and listened.I told her that I did not know *her* song. She said, "Sing *your* song then." I was a little reluctant and hesitated for a moment. Then my body began to sway and I snapped/popped my fingers to the music in my head before the words escaped my lips. I sang, "Have you ever passed the corner of fourth and grand, where a little ball of rhythm has a shoeshine stand. People gather 'round and they clap their hands; he's a great big bundle of joy. He pops a boogie-woogie rag, the Chattanooga shoeshine boy."²⁷ I thought that it was a good rock and roll song. She looked directly into my eyes and told me to come back the following Sunday. She was the first preacher woman that I ever saw or heard. I wondered what the man from Galilee would think of my song. I was twelve going on thirteen and I never went back there.

²⁷ Jack Stapp, *Chattanooga Shoeshine Boy*, (Nashville, TN: Acuff-Rose Publishing Co. 1951) .

Reflecting upon historical texts reveals the role of clergywomen and how support of each other forged a path toward a modicum of recognition in the early history of preaching. Hayes and Holiday believed that “Historical criticism of documents is based on the assumption that a text is historical in at least two senses; it may relate history as well as have its own history. For this reason, we can distinguish between the “history *in* the text” and the history *of* the text.”²⁸ History can document certain events such as earthquakes, terrorist attacks and tornadoes. History can document births, deaths, war and peacetime, but how accurately or truthfully can history show the difficulties within faith communities in the struggles of clergywomen to grow in a patriarchal society when there are many, many intangibles to consider or interpret before investigating and documenting details as facts ?

In my view, history is the fertile soil and when seeds are planted and nurtured, something true and valuable will emerge. However, when weeds (undocumented/ignored history) or non germinated (documented but stolen/distorted) seeds are perpetrated on society, traditions and fabrications abound. Women who have been denied access to preach from the pulpit in the past existed under a distorted version of 1Cor. 14:34. Many pastors who continue to support the ideas behind the exclusion banner toward clergywomen today really do not understand the call of God to be a mystery. Each individual who has been called by God usually claim to have a unique spiritual experience as her/his introduction to preaching or the life of service vocation. These clergywomen, pastors and many in other professions can, to a greater degree, be truthfully and properly documented historically due to modern technology, print media, and television than archaic methods in ancient times.

²⁸ John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis a Beginner’s Handbook* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1987). 45.C

Some of the intangibles to consider are: who is speaking for the voiceless or marginalize? Are the abusers from a Third World country or a culture where wives can be murdered or burned alive if the husband deems it to happen? Is there a, “silent majority” of pastors who offer no opinion, no defense or display indifference and snubs to clergywomen who wish to preach in their churches or other churches in their own community? Do they wish to maintain the status quo? The Practice Preaching Forum is a new model from which documentation and factual information can be gleaned, charted, observed and practiced.

In the early preaching history of clergywomen, reliable information in my view would have been biographies, church minutes or autobiographies as a first level in recording information correctly. However, the possibility of bias/interpretation of the recorder could easily be incorporated into the work because many women could not read or write. Historians cannot document whom the first person was who preached or practiced preaching standing on a tree stump in the woods or in a barn, someone’s kitchen or behind an outhouse. However, the stories can still be told (oral tradition). Additional material recorded by religious organizations or in government papers are acceptable but with scrutiny.

The Practice Preaching Forum (PPF) is a new paradigm. However, as an idea, it could not have come to fruition without the sacrifice, pain and even death of many women called by God to preach the Gospel. Today, pulpits are beginning to open up to clergywomen all over America. Clergywomen are becoming pastors of their own churches and must be able to minister to women and girls hurting in the pews. It has been reported that, “All day long, women are verbally intimidated, battered, injured, and killed by men they live with. If as Susan Brown-Miller has said, ‘rapists are the shock troops of patriarchy,’

then batterers are the army of occupation.”²⁹ However, to be effective and prepared to minister to hurting souls, study and a place to practice is ideal. A large number of preaching women are still waiting for God to move them from a controlling, non-inclusive church environment and the PPF is also waiting for them.

I am very happy to see women pastors become a growing force in the faith community. The New York Times reporter, Zara Katz interviewed Rev. Susie Elliot for a story she did on Women in the Pulpit. She writes, “Nearly 20 years ago, when Rev. Susie Elliot, 83, preached her first sermon at Mt. Paran Baptist Church on the border of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick, she was an anomaly in Brooklyn’s male-dominated world of Christian pastors.

Pastor Susie discovered early on that simply being ordained would not guarantee a woman a spot at the pulpit. Often women were “benched” while the men led the congregation. Determined to level the playing field, she founded Mother/Daughters of Zion, a group that champions women as pastors and supports their efforts to become leaders in their own churches. She now leads Mt. Paran, with her daughter, Damele Collier, 38.”³⁰ My group, the Daughters of Thunder had a wonderful, prayerful and fun fellowship over the Christmas holiday with the Daughters of Zion. This group of women work in the service of God under the umbrella (real umbrella with symbolic meaning) in which each “prong” carries meaning; leadership development, economic freedom, sharing resources, learning balance between church and family but most importantly spiritual development. I agree with Rev. Elliot, that tools such as workshops and seminars act as catalysts to activate those gifts.

²⁹ Letty M.Russell, Editor, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminister Press, 1985), 96.

³⁰ Zara Katz, “8 Women at the Pulpit,” *New York Times*, 12 January 2014.

Training is an integral part of growth and development as a clergymwoman. She must practice in her vocation to increase her confidence, dedication and make use of her passion. I use the term “passion” as utilizing it in her heart, not necessarily using whooping, and mimicry or facial expressions to expound upon the Word. Those who sit in the pews must be able to understand or digest the preaching woman’s words of exhortation and find them spiritually acceptable as well as liberating.

Parishioners are exposed to mass media on a daily basis. Television, radio, smart phones, videos, ipads, movies and ipods are just instruments or tools of this age to intrigue and engage the consumers and get their messages out. The Practice Preaching Forum believes that faith, training and a passion that drives clergymwomen can produce an effective, amazing and enthralling sermon which can claim the attention of all who hear it. A sermon fueled by love, knowledge and passion can bring healing to unseen pain or wounds.

I attended a dedication service for the installation of a new president for Pastor Elliot’s group. Rev. Susie Elliot encouraged everyone to serve God and told us to remember that our gifts will make room for us. However, as the patriarchy declines let not a matriarchy arise. “I do not wish to witness the improprieties that may have been perpetrated against women preachers in the past done to other clergymwomen today.” Though this project is not about clergymwomen ordinations, the struggle to preach publically is not dissimilar to gaining access to the pulpit in some mainstream denominations. It would be great if all clergymwomen would ask themselves if their greatest strength in the ministry is holding them back. The Practice Preaching Forum can help them in finding the answer. All seekers of ordination now must realize that it is just another challenge for women. If it were not for female television evangelists today (ordained/not ordained) some clergymwomen would never have

heard another female minister preach. When we glance backward, down the corridors of time, we see how our antebellum/Quaker sisters preached through denominational resistance and exclusion and how we should not relinquish our quest for gender equality in the church and in every other area of life. Early women ministers of great stature, such as Lucretia Collins Mott (1793-1880), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1816-1902), Lucy Stone Blackwell (1818-1893), and Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) were never ordained but they preached and paved the way.³¹

Mountford recognized that “While there are clear parallels between the problems faced by European American women and African American women in the fight for ordination, womanist theologians and religious historians draw sharp distinctions between these groups. Gilkes argues, ‘[T]he world view of African slaves did *not* exclude women from religions and political authority. The realities of slavery guaranteed, furthermore, that black women were never treated as white women were.’”³²

Many clergywomen are presently accepted for ordination but history has shown that they remain just “helpers” in the churches. However, biographers and autobiographies give us impressive insight into the lives, suffering and perseverance of preaching women and the groups of denominations and split denominations that were resistant to women preaching, from colonial times to the twentieth century. There are ordained clergywomen in the Practice Preaching Forum and on the Site Team. Resistance to allowing a woman in the pulpit is still alive and somewhat well in the twenty-first century.

³¹ Ella Pearson Mitchell, *Women: To Preach or Not to Preach*, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1991), 14.

³² Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, (Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003). 171.

Chaves puts it this way, “Before the Civil War, proponents of female preaching almost always based their arguments more on the extraordinary abilities of the few women who wanted to preach or on the special religious sensibilities of women or on the practical need for effective workers for Christ than on the principle of gender equality. Catherine Brekus (1996b:39) summarizes the views of antebellum female preachers within Methodism by saying that ‘very few of these women ever demanded complete equality to men,’ and very few were involved with the women’s rights movement. “Instead of demanding political or legal equality to men [female preachers] continued to laud the virtues of female subordination.”³³

I was a guest speaker at a program sponsored by 99 year old Mother Beulah Turner-Brown at her church in Staten Island. She was a vibrant and energetic woman. Her singing and her agility took me aback. She was small in stature perhaps a bit less than five feet tall and spoke with clarity and boldness. The following year, I attended her book signing for “From Rags to Riches” at her 100th birthday celebration in the village of Harlem in New York. She does not wear eyeglasses and under the advice of her family, will cease driving. Her book was published in 2012 and she was now in the process of writing a second. Mother Turner-Brown stated, “Today is March 28, 2008; I am sitting at the computer at the age of 94 typing this. I feel I am a special vessel, I drive my car, a 2004 Mountaineer, from Manhattan every Sunday to Staten Island, NY, that’s the kind of God I serve.”³⁴ She indicated in her book that all male pastors that she encountered were supporters of her because “she followed Jesus.” The examples in Scriptures that show women following Jesus is most often ignored

³³ Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, (Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 1999). 66.

³⁴ Mother Beulah Turner-Brown, *From Rags to Riches* (Bloomington, In: Trafford Publishing Company, 2012,) 11.

and repackaged to meet the habits, norms or behavior of today's pastors to accommodate their own interpretations. Sedmak acknowledges that, "The example of Jesus poses a number of challenges to the contemporary Church. It imposes a prophetic mandate to speak for those who have no one to speak for them, to be a defender of the defenseless, who in biblical terms are the poor. It also demands a compassionate vision that enables the church to see things from the side of the poor and powerless and to assess lifestyle, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor (no. 52)." ³⁵

Many African American preachers preached the Word of God without the permission of any one human soul. My grandparents listened to the Word from a traveling preacher/itinerant preacher in their kitchen around a pot bellied stove (a wood burning cast iron stove) in one room and a wood burning fireplace roaring in another room to make room for neighbors to hear comfortably when it was cold. On other occasions service was held on the porch in the summer, until the church was built. There were no women preachers that I ever saw, but I heard stories in my grandparent's home about preaching women. History documents the oppressive system of racism and patriarchal domination against all women preachers during the Great Awakening (a period of religious revival in American religious history) especially black women preachers. There was freedom in preaching and satisfaction in winning souls to Christ. At least that is the way I heard it.

As an African American Woman, I say with sorrow that I have never attended a segregated school. I am sorrowful because early elementary school in New Haven, Connecticut was very lonely and isolating until school ended when I met up with my friends on the road near my school to walk home. It was the early 1940's. I experienced covert racism in my school and recognized it even then as a small child. My teachers never gave

³⁵ Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 100.

me homework, never asked for anything, never called upon me; I was just there, invisible. At lunchtime the white children never called me any names, never asked me to play, I was just there. I was invisible. When I think of all the unnamed Black clergywomen who made it possible for me to be seen and heard, I know that I am an eagle and not a chicken.

The test of discipleship (allowed to be a follower) has been a journey deserved and undeserved. I say undeserved because the price they paid was so great and unimaginable. The price that I have paid has been negligible. I also give kudos to the Quaker or Friends during and after slavery (antebellum period) that risked their lives to help black women preachers. I see clearly now that this project is truly a mirror reflection of me when I was invisible. Though I was a child, I know what it feels like to be excluded. Oddly enough, I did know why at an early age. The reasons remain the same today-----fear and hate and a need to feel superior. The color of my skin is royal black and I love it. I thank my deceased grandparents for the flame of this consciousness that has always burned in my heart. I thank the countless black women preachers who stood their ground when there was no one there to offer a helping hand.

The foundation for the Practice Preaching Forum truly rests on the groundwork of history making clergywomen. A full list of documented clergywomen beginning in the 1700's is far too exhaustive here; therefore I am presenting an annotated list of preaching women who have impacted history as recorded by authors Carl J. Schneider and Dorothy Schneider in their book *In Their Own Right*:-

ANNE HUTCHINSON (1591-1643) Anglican

Her effective religious leadership terrified the Puritan civil and church powers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony almost from the moment of her arrival in 1634, four years after the colony's founding. She questioned the sermons of clergy who preached that people could

contribute to their own salvation by their works, whereas Hutchinson believed that only God's grace could save his creatures from damnation. She had fifteen children and practiced as a skilled midwife and herbalist.³⁶

Note - Quakers constituted the overwhelming majority of all clergywomen in colonial and revolutionary America. Two historical events empowered them (as well as strengthening women Quaker Public Friends): the First Great Awakening (1730's to 1760's), and the disestablishment of American churches (1777-1833). The First Great Awakening was one of those periods of intense religiosity that have punctuated American history. The Second Great Awakening was a Protestant revival movement during the early 19th Century in the United States.

ELIZABETH HARRIS (1656)

She traveled from England to Maryland to preach; four Quaker women and four Quaker men landed in Boston, where they were imprisoned and returned to England; and English missionaries Ann Austin, mother of five children, and Mary Fisher, a twenty-two-year old servant girl, were imprisoned, stripped, examined for signs of witchcraft, kept without light or writing materials for five weeks, and shipped out of Boston. They were ministers of Friends before the organizing of the Society of Friends in 1668 (by George Fox).³⁷

MOTHER MARY ANN LEE (1736-1784) Quaker Tradition

She endured persecution and believed in celibacy and claimed the most powerful position within the community she founded.

JEMINA WILKINSON (1752-1819) Publick Universal Friend

Quakers disowned her, but by 1787 Wilkinson had built a following of at least two hundred. In her ideal community each member was to own her or his own land and work as

³⁶ Carl J. and Dorothy Schneider, *In Their Own Right* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 3-5.

³⁷ Ibid., 5.

an individual, but to donate some time and substance to support Wilkinson and her household.

UNNAMED BLACK CLERGYWOMEN (1816-1849)

“Volunteer black workers of both genders assisted white Methodist missionaries... from 1816-1849, though none were licensed or ordained, a number of African American women were preaching more or less professionally—sometimes under the guise of ushers, elders, or deaconesses.”³⁸

ZILPHA ELAW (b.1790)

Freeborn African-American itinerant reported much acceptance and many invitations to preach from male clergy, even in the slaveholding states.

JARENA LEE (b. 1783)

African-American Jarena Lee, when her visions persuaded her that God wanted her to preach, approached Richard Allen, founder and bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen disapproved but several years later after hearing her preach, he gave his blessing. Lee itinerated alone and in 1827, she traveled 2,325 miles on foot and by wagon, ferryboat, and carriage, and delivered 178 sermons. She believed it better, she said, “to wear out than to rust out.” Rightly or wrongly, she described herself as “the first female preacher of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church.”³⁹

³⁸ Ibid., 14-16

³⁹ Ibid., 26



Mrs. Jarena Lee
Antebellum Black preacher and exhorter

I think I especially admire African American Jarena Lee because she reminds me of the task in my vision for a preaching forum. She believed that God called her to preach and was denied access to the pulpit but kept on trucking (persevered) until the African Methodist Church granted permission. However, it was not granted until the founder of the church actually heard her preach. That is why clergywomen of today must be ready or prepared to bring forth the message. Let not a lack of ability and knowledge of the Bible be swept aside by some patriarchal excuse to make you oppressed and invisible. The PPF builds your confidence and secures your assurance in your calling. I mean that every clergywoman will be so prepared and ready to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ after training.

Many sermons were preached in the cotton fields in the south. Songs were sung in the cotton fields in the south. And I can tell you that men and women made love in the cotton fields of the south. Preachers held meetings in the barns and on campgrounds. I had

the privilege of attending a tent meeting approximately seven years ago sponsored by Pastor Phillip Edward Elliott of the Antioch Baptist Church in Hempstead, L.I. It was very different than sitting in an enclosed structure without the sounds of the community. There were musicians, soloists, a generator that furnished light and electricity, water, car doors opening and shutting, microphones blaring, diesel fuel odors from passing trucks and the wait for the man of God known as the preacher of the hour. That was part of my experience at the tent meeting. All I could think of was, “how did my ancestors manage the mosquitos, bugs, heat and noise and still worse, no electricity.” How ungrateful of me. The beautiful gospel voice coming through the sound system was glorious and I silently gave thanks to Amanda Berry Smith born in 1837 one hundred years before my birth.

NORA SIENS HUNTER (b1873)

“She ministered from the Floating Bethel, a gospel houseboat built on a flatboat, where workers advertised meetings by putting notices in bottles and throwing them into the Ohio River.”⁴⁰

MARY COLE (b. 1853)

She tore up her Methodist membership letter when her church refused to acknowledge her call to the ministry; she then resorted to the Church of God. . . . Her meetings were plagued with hurled eggs, fumes from the red peppers someone put on a stove, even gunshots, and the spread of a rumor that she was one of the James boys, disguised as a woman. But she survived to win many a camp meeting race to the pulpit, where the person who got there first was the person who preached.⁴¹

JANE WILLIAMS (D.O.B. unavailable)

⁴⁰ Ibid., 80

⁴¹ Ibid., 80, 151

“An African-American woman who pioneered for the Church of God, about 1886, Jane Williams started a congregation in Charleston, South Carolina, that became the denominational headquarters in the South.”⁴²

AMANDA BERRY SMITH (1837-1915)

Of all African-American holiness “preacher women” of the late nineteenth century, evangelist Amanda Berry Smith achieved the most fame. Her powerful preaching and her singing won her respect not only in the United States but also in Europe and Africa. . . . Believing herself ordained by God, she never sought institutional ordination, but refraining availed her nothing. Clergymen blamed her anyway for what they supposed she believed.⁴³

DARLENE ALFORD (D.O.B. unavailable)

“In the American Association of Women Ministers (Madeline Southard founder) in 1986 turned up a young phenomenon, Darlene Alford of Kenosha, Wisconsin, an elder in the Old Way Holiness Pentecostal Churches of America, founded by her father; she was called to ministry at six, licensed at seven, and ordained at eight.”⁴⁴

The world has recognized women internationally by celebrating March 8th as International Women’s Day. The entire month of March is also Women’s History Month. In some places like China, Russia, Vietnam and Bulgaria, International Women’s Day is a National holiday. For Women’s History Month March 2006, former New York State Senator Charles J. Fuschillo Jr. sponsored a booklet entitled “Women of Distinction.” It opens with the following statement, “The New York State Senate, in observation of Women’s History Month, is taking special note of the enormous contributions that women have made

⁴² Ibid., 80

⁴³ Ibid., 81

⁴⁴ Ibid., 164

throughout the history of our state and nation. These women honored in this exhibit represent a small sample of the countless women who have enriched the quality of life in the Empire State and beyond. Their achievements should be a source of pride and inspiration to all New Yorkers.”⁴⁵ I will cite one individual from each category of this booklet, in an abbreviated notation, except the last entry which will be cited in its entirety.

2006 Inductees

Lenora Marie (Kearney) Barry (1849-1930)

Gertrude Caroline Ederle (1906-2003)

Anna Caroline Maxwell (1851-1929)

Ella Fitzgerald (1917-1996)

Ella Fitzgerald is considered the quintessential female jazz singer. Orphaned in early childhood, Fitzgerald moved to Yonkers, New York, to attend an orphanage school. She was “discovered” in 1945 in an amateur contest sponsored by New York City’s Apollo Theatre.

Arts and Entertainment

Lucille Ball (1911-1989)

Julia de Burgos (1917-1953)

Charlotte Pruyn Hyde (1867-1963)

Shirley Muldowney (1940-)

Eve Rabin Queler (1936-)

Anna “Grandma Moses” Robertson (1860-1961)

Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman (“Nellie Bly”) (c.1867-1922)

Bara Stanwyck (1907-1990)

⁴⁵ *Women of Distinction* - Honoring Women’s History Month 2006 Sponsored by NY State Senator Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875-1942)

Shirley Muldowney (1940-)

Shirley Muldowney was the first woman to be licensed by the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) to drive a Top Fuel Dragster; she was the first woman to win a national event, and was the only driver—male or female—to win the Winston World Championship title three times.

Education

Margaret Leech (1893-1074)

Winifred Edgerton Merrill (1862-1951)

Ruth Nichols (1901-1960)

Emma Hart Willard (1787-1870)

Emma Hart Willard was the organizer of the first higher education institution for women, which eventually became the Emma Willard School in Troy. Her pioneering efforts to equalize the education available to women and men attracted the support of President James Monroe, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams.

Government & Law

Katherine Bement Davis (1869-1935)

Mary Donlon (1894-1977)

Rhoda Fox Graves (1877-1950)

Belva Lockwood (1830-1917)

Sybil Ludington (1761-1839)

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)

Charlotte Ray (1850-1911)

Charlotte Ray became the first African-American woman in the United States to earn a law degree. Charlotte Ray was the daughter of a well-known abolitionist in New York City. Her father edited the *Colored American* and was the pastor of the Bethesda Congregational Church. Ms. Ray was of mixed racial ancestry, including Native American and European. As a child, she attended the Institution for the Education of Colored Youth in Washington, D.C., where she excelled as a student. By 1869, she taught at Howard University by day and studied law at night.

Heroes

Yamel Merino, Emergency Medical Technician (1976-2001)

Moira Smith, Police Officer, NYPD (1963-2001)

Kathy Mazza, Port Authority Police Officer (1995-2001)

Capt. Kathy Mazza of Farmingdale, L.I. was the first female Port Authority Officer killed in the line of duty. She died in the World Trade Center tragedy along with 36 of her Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) colleagues—3% of the entire force that is dedicated to patrolling the New York Metro area's airports, bridges, tunnels and railways. No police department in U.S. history lost more officers in a single incident as the PAPD on September 11, 2001.

Labor & Business

Louise Blanchard Bethune (1865-1913)

Kate Gleason (1865-1933)

Martha Matilda Harper (1857-1950)

Lady Deborah Moody (1580-1659)

Kate Mullany (1845-1906)

Mary “Mollie” Sneden (1709-1810)

Madam C.J. Walker (1832-1919)

Madam C. J. transformed herself from an uneducated farm laborer and laundress into America’s first self-made, female millionaire, not to mention one of the 20th century’s most successful entrepreneurs.

Military

Mary Clarke (1924-)

Margaret Cochran Corbin (1751-c.1800)

Juliane Galina (1970-)

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker 1832-1919)

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker was the only woman to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. Dr. Mary Edwards Walker was so far ahead of her time that she was acclaimed not as much for her patriotism as for being “that shocking female surgeon in trousers.” Awarded the Medal of Honor in 1865 for her heroic efforts in the Civil War, Dr. Walker was a surgeon as well as a Union spy who was held as a prisoner of war.

Science & Technology

Katherine Burr Blodgett (1898-1979)

Charlotte Friend (1921-1987)

Grace Brewster Murray Hopper (1906-1992)

Mary Putnam Jacobi (1842-1906)

Barbara McClintock (1902-1992)

Lucy Hobbs Taylor (1833-1910)

Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910)

Lucy Hobbs Taylor was the first woman in the world to earn a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), Lucy Hobbs Taylor was born in Ellenburg, Clinton County, in 1833. Her quest to become a dentist was arduous and frustrating, yet her persistence never wavered.

Social Reformers

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)

Antoinette Brown Blackwell (1825-1921)

Amelia Jenks Bloomer (1818-1894)

Clara Hale (1905-1992)

Lucretia Mott (1793-1880)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) (1815-1902)

Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680)

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883)

Harriet Tubman (c.1820-1913)

Ann Lee (1736-1784)

Mary Shotwell Ingraham (1887-1981)

Harriet Tubman was born a slave on a plantation in Maryland. Harriet Tubman fled in 1849 after hearing rumors that she was about to be sold. She married John Tubman at the age of 24, and told him that she wanted to escape to the North. He told her that he would not let her leave, but Harriet did escape, leaving behind her husband, her parents and her sisters. After her own escape, she assisted about 300 fugitive slaves over the next decade along the “Underground Railroad” to Canada.

She became the railroad's most famous conductor, and was known as the "Moses of her people." She settled on a farm in Auburn in about 1858, and served in the Union forces as a spy, nurse and laundress during the Civil War. After the war, she began caring for orphans and old people at her Auburn farm, forming the Harriet Tubman Home for Indigent Aged Negroes. Harriet died in her home in 1913, at the age of 93. Today, The Harriet Tubman Center (HTC) continues the kind of work she had begun many years ago. The Center provides a safe passage from violence for women and children, and helps them achieve their own freedom, just as Harriet helped so many people achieve freedom.

From a historical context, the Practice Preaching Forum has the approval of my spiritual sisters of antiquity in this social climate where the world celebrates women and their history for the entire month of March.

CHAPTER 7

BIBLICAL

Contemporary engagement and debate over the interpretation of 1Cor. 14.34 which reads, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says,” present a dilemma to many women preachers. What process toward awareness, change and solution can women attain as they exercise their calling; striving for understanding and greater communication among all cultures within the community, through the lens of 21st century proclaimers and practitioners of the Gospel?

A part of the belief system of Hebrew women was embedded within the family known as household codes, Col. 3: 18 - Col.4: 2-6. Paul expected the church to be at corporate prayer often. Not only are the apostles to speak the mystery of Christ, but every member of the church is to have speech...with grace so as to answer those seeking the true faith, (OSB commentary), which include women. This means that the process had already begun. I envisioned that there was a disagreement or argument in the church that caused Paul to make that statement in 1Cor. 14:34. Women were expressing their opinions to the unhappiness of their husbands. That is why Paul had to add, “As the law also says.” He used diplomacy and his knowledge of the law to quell whatever it was that was threatening peace. Did these Hebrew women need reminding? Emphatically no! They were fully aware of their limited role publically.

The household codes required a high degree of responsibility and mutual respect for all members of the Christian family and they did not give absolute power to the men. Where it is written, “Wives submit to your own husbands as is fitting in the Lord,” indicates that the husband should have the attributes of Christ. Life in the home is in the Lord; the family is a little church and is to live in the baptismal and Eucharistic life of the church. Duties are reciprocal, everyone having the same standing before the same master. All submission is for the loving service to God and is glorious. It is neither service nor silence and it cannot be called anything else except love and respect for each other. Eph. 5:21 clearly shows mutual submission and Eph. 6:9 demonstrates that women have voice because the Bible tells us “there is no partiality in Him.”

Clear, biblical investigation of gender issues associated with silence and oppression must be understood. In the world of today, gender issues abound. Culture and gender issues are intertwined. We hear stories from the missionaries of our country about the injustices perpetrated upon women that they see when they travel to other nations. We hear that in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, there is a ban on allowing women to drive vehicles. If a man who is sympathetic to the plight of these women is caught allowing women to drive or assisting them in learning how to drive, he risks his job or social status in his community. In India, women can be murdered in a horrible fashion for adultery (burned alive). The atrocities are many and the freedom that we take for granted should never be trivialized. This is important to understand in order to preach to others from distant shores as well our own citizens who experience oppression and lack of freedom and may be sitting in the pews of a congregation.

Hebrew women did not work outside of the home therefore they never encountered a “glass ceiling.” In its most simplistic form, a glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that is used by those in power to prevent women from progressing in their vocation or occupation (career). It is manifested in many different ways, for example, by less pay for the same position, being purposely overlooked for promotion, ignored (no voice) and/or denied access to the pulpit. In Old Testament times women were thought of as property; this attitude prevailed into the New Testament times. There were some women in Scripture who were oppressed but not silent, women like Esther and Vashti in Esther 1:1-2:4 and Esther 1:12.

Moreover, cultural and biblical identification of the issues must be viewed from a “kingdom” culture because the kingdom of God supersedes all others. Christians often speak of Christ in us and that means humankind. The Bible never says that men could have 75% of Christ and only 25% in women or some such division. God is inclusive. Christians are a part of the body of Christ and are united with love, faith and the Spirit of God. It was man who created this system of exclusion and it is he who should remove it.

Demonstrations of skilled and knowledgeable proclaimers of the Gospel can usher in revivals that are powerful enough to bring about reform in attitude and action. Historical evidence reveals that both men and women were active participants in all areas of ministry. However, “It is impossible to determine with certainty the extent of their participation in prescribed or reported activities. Isolated clues suggest, however, that women attended major communal feast and rituals, insofar as personal and domestic circumstances permitted, and presumably contributed to the preparation of meals and of

food (special grain offering).⁴⁶ Luke's gospel is the gospel of women, and more clearly than the other gospels it describes the open, welcoming attitude of Jesus toward women, and the place he allowed them to occupy in his ministry.⁴⁷ Men believed that they had to be the mediators between God and women. If that were true, there would be no biblical record of a theophany to women such as Hagar in the wilderness and the women at the tomb of Jesus. "Many of the women attracted to Jesus' radical teaching, according to Luke, were wealthy women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna financed Jesus' ministry out of their abundant resources (Luke 8:1-3); Lydia, a successful businesswoman who specialized in purple dyes, opened her home to the nascent church (Acts 16:12-15); and more than a "few leading women" of Thessalonica were converted under Paul and Silas' teachings (Acts 17:4).⁴⁸

The debate, over 1 Cor. 14:34, appears to indicate that "Only males could mediate between God and humans. This was symbolically expressed in the all-male priesthood, the various ways of excluding women from the most essential and meaningful religious ritual: i.e. their exclusion from the formation of the minyan; their segregated seating in the temple, their exclusion as active participants from the temple service, etc. Women were denied equal access to religious learning and the priesthood, and thereby they were denied the capacity of interpreting and altering the religious belief system."⁴⁹ The term "minyan" is defined as the number needed for adult service. The minimum number

⁴⁶ Alice Bach, *Women in the Hebrew Bible*, (New York: Routledge Press, 1999), 12.

⁴⁷ John Stott, *Men With A Message: An Introduction To The New Testament And Its Writers*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1994), 51.

⁴⁸ Renita J. Weems, *Just A Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*, (Philadelphia, PA: Innisfree Press, Inc. 1988), 85.

⁴⁹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 201.

required to be present is 10. However, Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst them” (Matt. 18:20).

Additionally, “Women functioned as fellow workers with Paul in the work of missions, evangelizing, and proclaiming the Gospel. Paul mentions Euodia and Syntch (Phil. 4:2-3) and Prisca, another coworker who instructed Appollos in the correct doctrine of preaching (Acts 28:26). One woman is called an “apostle” by Paul in Romans 16:7, as he referred to Andronicus and Junia. Some exegetes dispute this by saying that Junia is also a man’s name. Several terms such as diakonos, apostle and coworker were found in reference to men and women. They include Phoebe, diakonos; apostle, Junia; and coworker Prisca.”⁵⁰

We know little about the women in Paul’s life. The only time he mentions his mother is in Gal. 1:15 when he made a conditional statement by saying, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through his grace.” It was, in my opinion, an encouraging and positive remark in that it was mentioned at all seeing that it was about a woman. We also know that Paul had a sister (Acts 23:16) and a nephew. It is interesting to note that many other women in the bible remain nameless. Moreover, “Paul’s use of the early Christian baptismal slogan ‘neither male nor female’ (Gal 3:28) offers weighty evidence that he was not the misogynist [woman hater] that fundamentalist Christians, especially have made him out to be.”⁵¹

I think that the church is a sub-community organism (an independent living community, but part of a larger community) operating to polarize cultures, introduce new

⁵⁰ Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without A Struggle*, (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1996), 60.

⁵¹ Robert T. Boyd. *Paul The Apostle*, (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Co. 1995), 431.

models and be a beacon of light and hope to an underserved community. Women make up the majority in the membership of many communities and cannot be made to be silent in the churches today except by acquiescing. Paul says, “Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God” (1Cor. 11: 11-12).

The words in 1Cor. 14:34 must be de-emphasized in relation to women being silent in the church. What many males do not understand about the call of women to preach is that it is by divine grace and not of ourselves. Some of these women’s senses of presence, experience and proclamations have been erased from biblical history.

I preached a series of three sermons, referencing Peter’s absence at the tomb of Jesus, The Messenger/Message and on Silence. I have selected one in its entirety, it must be noted that I have omitted the “amen,” or “can I get a witness” and “praise the Lord” as well as slang and other idiomatic expressions within the context of the narrative. THE GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX IS NOT CORRECT however, I have presented it here just as I delivered it as a proclaiming of the Word.

Subject: Where is Peter? Woman, Go tell His Disciples and Peter!

Sub-topic: When We all Get Together

Text: Mark 16:6-7

But He said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples----and Peter----that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.

Anti-thesis: obedience to the report of the women, doubt of the disciples, Peter's relationship to Jesus and deity.

Thesis: The results of the encounter and revelation at the tomb of the resurrected Christ and the Great Commission.

Relevant Question: The divine call to spread the word was first given to a woman and today we have the Holy Spirit.

Sermon:

An FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) profiler might say that Peter was a good leader, loyal but, impetuous. He would also say that he exhibited certain obvious weaknesses. Yet, he was the kind of man one would love to have on the team. This strong uneducated fisherman was quick to anger and as my old pastor used to say, "Man, that Peter could cuss like a sailor." Peter cared deeply for Jesus. Remembering the time when he confessed to Jesus that he, Jesus, was the Christ... There is no way that we'd believe that he'd turn right around and deny the master. Not once, not twice, but three times. Jesus once called Peter a rock however, he did not have a rock-like character. Peter and the rest of the disciples prayed, ate and slept with the Christ. Yet, he betrayed Him.

But now, we find ourselves observing Mary Magdalene and the other Mary approaching the tomb of Jesus. But, where was Peter? Didn't matter right then. God had a ram in the bush (a replacement) to move the Gospel from tomb to the world. If you or I won't go, some other laborer in God's vineyard will step up and say, **send me**. This time it was a woman proclaimer, God through his messenger ordained it? The angel spoke directly with Mary. When Jesus told Mary to tell Peter what had happened, He

was saying, in essence, “Peter, now you can see the way to the cross, now you understand salvation, now you don’t have to deny me or speak of giving up your life for me because I have given up my life for you. Now you can come and see me the resurrected Christ and I am sending a women that I have called to bring this message to you. I have risen from the dead as I have said, and I want you and the rest of the disciples to meet me in Galilee.

Even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble. That’s what Peter said right to Jesus’ face. My brother and my sister, we are not perfect, we say things with the conviction that we will do them. We pledge support sincerely to a friend, the church and the pastor, **And** sometimes come up short. We all have weaknesses. Jesus knows and he also knew that his disciples would stumble. You can’t surprise him with your weaknesses. He loves you too much and he knows about every weakness. The women carried the news of the message for Peter with fear and joyfulness. Verse 34, Jesus said to him, “(Peter) Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” Can we find a thread of commonality between Peter and the women at the tomb? Yes we can with a little imagination. Perhaps because, Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you. Oh, oh, Excuse me, I can’t remember, but did Peter die on the cross with Jesus? Did anyone of you see Peter on the cross? I don’t see any hands. Jesus told Peter before the denial, “this night before the rooster crows, you will deny me.” Could it be that Jesus wanted Peter to see that he died and was resurrected while Peter’s promise to die with him was invalid but would remain to be used as the faith builder? Peter would now have

everything he needed inside and outside of himself to believe and accept the Holy Spirit to do wondrous and powerful work while winning souls for the kingdom.

A funny thing concerning the rooster. You know, most people assume that hens and roosters were common in Palestine, but they are seldom mentioned in the Bible. Cocks were bred for the ancient sport of cockfighting before hens were raised for meat and eggs. Cocks crowed about midnight and again about 3A.M. The denial was to happen before the cock crowed. I don't think Peter was really listening to Jesus. Let's look at this again. Jesus said, "this night before the rooster crows. How many roosters do you know that crow at night? They crow the way God created them to do so in nature. Roosters do what roosters do. But this rooster did what the savior said it would do. The scene of the denial and the crowing of the rooster moved into the supernatural realm for when the king of Glory speaks, it is so. He wanted Peter to know that Salvation is truly free and his natural life was not up for grabs because JESUS PAID IT ALL." You have no excuses if you are truthful. Your life does not have to be lived in the darkness of a grave.

Right now, I see parallels between the angel telling the women not to be afraid and to take that message to Peter and the other disciples. That truth and vision of the resurrected Christ was that these women were witnesses to a powerful experience, which lead to what is now the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). It was given first to the women to take to those whom Jesus had taught and from whom the people would listen because the culture and status of women at that point in biblical history would not tolerate receiving the word from a woman. But Jesus set the stage, He used the women to "jump-start" or ignite the disciples to action.

I believe that Peter and the other disciples were not there was because of fear, shame and some lingering doubts. The other part of the message was that they were to meet Jesus in Galilee. We know that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The women went straightway to deliver the message. Can you be straight with the Lord today? Will you listen to your heart when he calls? The disciples went to Galilee to meet up with the resurrected Christ. They were ready to totally commit to the Christ. I can imagine this place in the mountains of Galilee to be the courthouse. The Christ is the living evidence; the women at the tomb were the witnesses and the God of the universe was the Judge. A contract (The Great Commission) was made in Galilee. It was unbreakable and totally acceptable by the disciples. Witnesses are permitted to speak and these first on the scene witnesses were women. They could not remain silent; they probably told every person in the village. The commitment was solid and the gospel went forth. You can come forth right now, give yourself to Jesus. He is waiting just for you. Come, the doors of the church are open. Don't give up on God because he won't give up on you. Won't you come? Amen.

This project was birthed out of the need to hone the preaching skill of clergymen at my site, to activate the gifts within them for reaching people bruised and hurting in the pews and the community. It was to develop relationships with women and girls, to be approachable (not too high or lofty) in order that faith and help could come by hearing. The challenges faced today are hunger, homelessness, rape, incest, drugs/alcohol, domestic violence, eating disorders and widowhood. In addition, the project's overall objective was to blend the practice of preaching and greater access to the pulpit and we were successful. I think that John 21:16 states it best when Peter's reply to

the question three times, “Do you love me more than these?” was yes. Jesus’ response to the first response was “Feed My lamb.” To the second answer in the affirmative, Jesus responded, “Tend My sheep” and his final reply to Peter was “Feed My sheep.” In Acts 20:28, Jesus says, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” As creator of this project, I do not believe that there should be a clergywoman on the planet that does not understand, “Feed My sheep.” These statements by Jesus address the purpose of the PPF. We must know how to help, provide and care for those in our homes, church and community, as we are all his sheep.

It is good to be fully aware that, “We are wise enough to know in our day and age that God is beyond male and female.”⁵² The Forum recognized that more time and practice was needed because we did not wish unprepared clergywomen preaching to an underserved congregation, one that gets preached at or verbally abused using the Scripture as the whip. At first, the challenge was daunting. However, completing the preliminary analysis of the challenge was certainly within our (Site Team) grasp and ability. The project site became our permanent practice location. Clergywomen could now come and work on traditional or untraditional models of preaching to perfect through practice and analysis.

The church pastor was supportive, affirming and the solution to gaining more access to the pulpit was solidified. The solution was simple, everyone was happy and it was easy to implement (the solution later). Surveys were distributed and discussions with the Site Team were brainstormed to determine which training process would be most

⁵² Cora Elizabeth Cypser, *Taking Off the Patriarchal Glasses*, (New York: Vantage Press, Inc. 1987), 16.

beneficial or effective to launch a powerful and authentic method of empowering clergywomen, those in the pews and community.

We readily acknowledge that it could be difficult to implement the goals and strategies necessary to bring awareness to the Practice Preaching Forum in an efficient and timely manner. Tabulating the results of the survey gave us the necessary steam (will/desire) to get the train (project) rolling on the right track. There was no real apprehension about bringing awareness, coordinating the details and selecting the best methods of implementation to generate the greatest amount of communal success. The Site Team and I found that leadership, good administration and organization set us in a comfortable place once people became aware of the project. Steps were taken to use the media as the best and fastest process to bring about awareness, followed by workshops and seminars.

The short term and long-term solutions were threaded (based on biblical, cultural/historical) through research, especially those related to the Bible, sociology and history. It is a poignant fact of humankind that adaptability of a new and workable paradigm takes only a little time to implement when congregants are fired up (over anxious) to be a part of it. I experienced that on the negative side within many churches, “The androcentric bias of the male interpreters of the tradition, who regard maleness as normative humanity, not only erase women’s presence in the past history of community but silence even the questions about their absence. One is not even able to remark upon or notice women’s absence, since women’s silence and absence is the norm.”⁵³

⁵³ Letty M. Russell, Feminist Interpretation of the Bible, (Philadelphia, PA.: Westminister Press, 1985), 113.

The pastor of OTOG can stand for something to be proud of, the solution to accessing the pulpit. This dilemma was solved in one fell swoop (quickly/altogether). The new model is for clergywomen to bring the word every Sunday morning at the most celebrated hour in the form of a fifteen-minute sermonette properly prepared and armed with the word of God that will tend and feed his sheep. After which, the pastor will preach according to the order of the Sunday morning program. The project was a great and total success because rotation of the preaching schedule continues (male and female). We have achieved respect, and understanding from the pastor of our house (church) and most of all “flavor,” because my Bible states, “How sweet to my taste are your teachings, more than honey and the honeycomb in my mouth” (Ps. 119:103).

Fortunately or unfortunately, I do not know, because the project is successful and has brought about change at my site however, there are some things I could have done differently:

1. I should not have accepted invitations to do workshops in other states during the development stage of the Practice Preaching Forum.
2. I should have accepted applications from interested clergypersons, even some students at New York Theological Seminary who were interested very early in the process when I still did not have a Site Team.
3. I should have made a concerted effort to introduce this project to more male pastors.
4. I should have implemented my idea to have male pastors do a three-day revival service followed by brainstorming sessions then allow on site sign up for churches wanting to replicate the project.

There remains the perception that I should come into the interested Pastors' churches and do the training. I have been impressing upon them to just follow the plan.

CHAPTER 8

MOVING FORWARD

The training ended with 70% of the clergy persons in the project professionally trained. The training would be deemed enviable by any educational standards because of the participation, role-playing, instructors/facilitators, assignments and questions and answer period. Finally, the size of the group (seven members) made it easy for each person to receive the information and attention needed. We had a graduation ceremony on a Sunday morning with the congregation and pastor in attendance and the certificates of completion were awarded. I also arranged a reception for all graduates. Each clergyperson brought one guest and we celebrated the journey we had traveled together with food, entertainment and joy. They had been faithful in attending the training sessions in good and inclement weather. One of the clergymen died during the training period. Another clergyperson missed all of the training due to several family funerals and personal family issues.

The impact of the training has influenced and empowered clergymen to move forward and implement the skills they have learned to help others in our church and the community. Isaiah 6:10 speaks to the state of the heart and of the ears and eyes of God's people. Indeed, the heart of our people today is emotionally stressed and our eyes are exposed to many undesirable visions (poverty, hunger, homelessness) and our ears hear the cries for help from every corner of the community. The voices of our clergypersons,

along with a “can do” attitude and the silent voices rising from the pews, may be able to bring about change, even if only a ripple. Our prepared clergypersons can go out with the commission to train those church clergy who have shown interest in having this project in their churches. There is no reason on this earth to keep this gift from God to ourselves. With the practicing and studying, they are more than qualified to reach those women and girls who sit languishing in the pews with presence, resources, compassion, understanding and attention. After Jesus prepared his disciples, he told them to be active in their teaching and training to bring about great change. Then Our Lord promised them that he would be with them always as they perform what he had commanded them to do. We know this to be The Great Commission today (Matt. 28:19-20) and while all power is not in our hands, we still have a savior who does have this power and has empowered us. We have several churches that are interested in creating a Practice Preaching Forum or sending their young preachers to our site. Each church that replicates this project has helped in expanding the project and spreading the Gospel with a healing message. The Practice Preaching Forum is local to each church and surrounding community. Using this method, effectiveness is reproduced just as an amoeba reproduces itself. The result will be that many voices will be heard. The next part of the vision may be to incorporate and apply for a 501©(3) and/or have all of the participating churches come together in an annual conference at some point in the future. Amen.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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